“Truly Free”
-
A Christian Guide for Addictions

2026 by Pastor John Paul, Northumberland County, ON. Canada.
Scripture quotations are from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB) and New Living Translation (NLT).
This resource is dedicated to the Public Domain.

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This booklet is dedicated to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (the Son of God),
who willingly came into this world, to die on the cross to atone for the sins of all those who would ever believe in Him. Although He is sinless, His sacrificial death and resurrection, makes it possible for all believers to approach the throne of God with confidence.
Clothed in His righteousness - we are “truly free.”

For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.
Jeremiah 29:11–13 (NLT)

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Introduction

Where to Begin?

The LORD says, “I will rescue those who love me. I will protect those who trust in my name. When they call on me, I will answer; I will be with them in trouble. I will rescue and honor them. I will reward them with a long life and give them my salvation.”
Psalm 91:14–16 (NLT)

Struggling with addiction. Having tried all other programs and ‘self-help’ methods. Nothing has worked. If this is you, then you have come to the right place. As the above Bible passage indicates, *without* God - more specifically - *without* Jesus Christ, nothing is going to work. Therefore, this booklet is primarily geared towards believers (Christians), who can apply the steps outlined in this resource, since they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. (If you are not a follower of Jesus Christ yet, but want to get to know Him - then Chapter 1 titled “The Gospel” will help you)

Are you still there? Great. So let us briefly consider how to use this guide. First, instead of using the term ‘addiction,’ we are using the term ‘habitual sin,’ since this better expresses what you are dealing with. As you will see throughout this booklet, man-made labels, such as ‘addiction’ are unhelpful and even contribute to the challenge you are already facing. Second, do not skip ahead, but read chapter by chapter. Get familiar with every part. This is not a one-time read, but is designed as a companion source for you, as you journey along the road to recovery with Jesus.

Third, since this guide is not a ‘quick fix,’ but rather a supportive resource, it will help you along your recovery process. Fourth, the chapters vary in length, but are pretty much self-explanatory. Bible verses are there to help you along the way (Scripture verses are from the BSB and NLT). Some ideas are intentionally repeated, for emphasis, and to help you keep your heart and mind focused on the cross of Christ.

In short, this booklet is there to help you overcome any ‘habitual sin(s)’ you are facing, to sustain you as you become aware and engage in daily spiritual warfare, and assist you, as you grow in your walk of faith with Jesus Christ. Realize though, that the Christian walk of faith is not one of ease, but of various challenges, which only Jesus can overcome.

Make sure that as you continue your journey to explore and use the resources provided at the end of the book (Appendix A to E). As said, this entire process is not a quick fix, but a life journey with our Lord, who will guide you and help you along the way. Without Jesus it is not going to work. However, “Anything is possible if a person believes” (Mark 9:23 NLT), and “So if the son sets you free, you are truly free” (John 8:36 NLT).

May God bless you and keep you.
Yours in Christ.
Pastor John and Team.

CHAPTER 1

The Gospel

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made, and without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

(…)

He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God— children born not of blood, nor of the desire or will of man, but born of God.

John 1:1–5, 10–13 (BSB)

I - The Good News (The Gospel)

What would you do if someone said to you, “I have good news for you! It will change your life forever! It is a special gift, just for you, and it is worth more than you could possibly imagine.” Would your ears perk up and would you shift your attention from whatever you are doing, to listen? What could it possibly be - an inheritance of some kind, a new car, home, possibly a new job? And where could this gift be coming from? Why, me? The thoughts running through your mind may be endless.

So, what is the ‘good news’? It is Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. But why? So, read on and find out why He is the ‘good news,’ and how He can and will change your life forever. There is nothing greater, and more valuable - a priceless gift - just for you, and you don’t have to do anything to get it - it is yours, and it is free. How wonderful is that?

Looking at the first verse above, if you have never read the Bible before (or maybe even you have in the past), you may be wondering, “What is the Word?” Actually, the question should be “*Who* is the Word?” The ‘Word,’ is Jesus Christ (‘God in the Flesh’). Here is what you need to know. Over two thousand years ago, Mary, (who was a virgin, and was engaged to be married) received the miraculous news that she was going to conceive and give birth to the Son of God:

> In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin pledged in marriage to a man named Joseph, who was of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary. The angel appeared to her and said, “Greetings,

> you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.” Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. So the angel told her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. His kingdom will never end!” “How can this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God.
>
> Luke 1:26–35 (BSB)

What was the significance of Jesus’ birth? He was born to save repentant sinners. Hundreds of years prior to Jesus’ coming, the prophets prophesied about His birth, life and death. Jesus was the fulfillment of those prophecies (Isaiah 9:6-7). This ‘good news’ (Gospel) was first announced to a group of shepherds watching over their flocks by night in the town of Bethlehem (where Jesus was born):

> And there were shepherds residing in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks by night. Just then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid! For behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord!
>
> Luke 2:8–11 (BSB)

It was a long awaited fulfillment of prophecy, thousands of years went by, as God was putting everything into place for Jesus’ arrival. Over the years the people prayed for a Savior, and finally, the day they had been waiting for had arrived (Luke 2:29-32).

Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:4-6; Micah 5:2), and was raised by Joseph and Mary (his earthly parents) in the town of Nazareth (Luke 2:51-52). The Bible does not tell us much about Jesus’ life from birth to adulthood. He started His ministry at the age of 30 - teaching about the kingdom of God, drawing people to Himself, and promising eternal salvation - a promise verified through His resurrection - to all who will ever believe in Him (Romans 10:8-10).

Jesus also came to teach people about the kingdom of God, to be crucified, to offer His own life as a substitutionary atonement for our sins, and to give us eternal life through His resurrection (three days later) for those who believe in Him. Because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, he was born *without sin* - the spotless lamb of God.

Throughout, Jesus' ministry, He not only taught about the kingdom of God, but He performed many miracles (Matthew 15:30). Teaching and healing those who were blind, lame, sick, or demon-possessed, was a large part of His ministry. But that was not the main reason for His arrival. Jesus is the Messiah - the Christ - and although He came into the world He created, His own people did not recognize Him. His main purpose of coming into this world was to serve, suffer, die (on the cross), and three days later rise from the dead (the resurrection).

What is the significance of His crucifixion and death (Luke 23:26-56)? To atone for the sins of all believers (past, present, and future). Jesus paid the debt that we ourselves should have paid - dying for our sins (Colossians 2:13-14).

So why did He let Himself be crucified? One, His love for us is so great that He became 'sin' on our behalf in order to die a substitutionary death on the cross (with all its humiliation and suffering), in order to atone for our sins. Two, there was no other way that we could pay for our sin debt, since we are all born in sin - reaching back to the time of Adam and Eve - as a result of the fall of mankind.

There is nothing that we can do or say, that could redeem us, so God had to send His one and only son, Jesus, to take our place (2 Corinthians 5:21). Three, because the sacrifice of lambs and bulls could not redeem us from our sins (Hebrews 10:4), there had to be an ultimate sacrifice - the sinless Lamb of God (that is Jesus) (1 Corinthians 15:56-57) - since only He (born *without* sin) can take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Furthermore, after Jesus' death came His resurrection. What is the significance of the resurrection and why does it matter? Through belief and faith in Jesus we are saved. This is the foundation on which Christianity is based. As a result of His resurrection, He defeated Satan, all sin, evil and death (Colossians 2:13-15).

The resurrection is a fact. There were many witnesses to His resurrected body as he physically appeared to many people after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-8). Having risen, Jesus remained here on earth for forty days and revealed Himself to many people - showing proof that He was alive (Acts 1:3). Then, it was time for Jesus to return back home

to heaven (the Ascension). After giving His disciples final instructions, He ascended to heaven:

> *"...But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* After He had said this, they watched as He was taken up, and a cloud hid Him from their sight. They were looking intently into the sky as He was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go Into heaven."
>
> Acts 1:8–11 (BSB)

However, the 'good news' doesn't end there. On the day of Pentecost, as promised by Jesus, the Holy Spirit arrives and all the believers who were with Peter and the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). The moment a repentant sinner believes in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes upon that person, and seals him/her for the day of redemption. As third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit never leaves a Christian, and therefore, salvation cannot be lost (Ephesians 1:13; Titus 3:5).

Is Jesus coming back, and when will He return? The Bible doesn't tell us when Jesus will return (the 'Second Coming') (Matthew 24:36). But we do know that He *is* returning (Acts 1:10-11). As Christians we are to stay alert and continue to do God's work, until He returns. Jesus promises us that He will return in order to take those believers, who are still alive, home to heaven where He has prepared a place for us (John 14:1-3).

Jesus is coming back, not only to 'rapture the church' (to bring believers home), but He is coming to put everything right, once and for all - to rid the world of all evil and to establish His kingdom here on earth (the new earth) - forever:

> *"Behold, I am coming soon, and My reward is with Me, to give to each one according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."* Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by its gates. But outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. *"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright Morning Star."*
>
> Revelation 22:12–16 (BSB)

In the meantime, we have a job to do, and that is to tell people about the ‘good news.’ This is called the ‘Great Commission,’ and it is a command from Jesus to *all* believers everywhere (Matthew 28:18-20).

So, you see why it is called the ‘good news.’ Where else can you find a free gift like this? It is God’s grace (given to us freely, even though we have done nothing to deserve it), and God’s mercy (God *not* giving us what we really deserve). This is why we always give thanks and praise to God. For we could never do enough (‘good deeds’) or do anything of merit, to atone for all the sins we have committed in our lifetime, knowingly and unknowingly. Therefore, the ‘good news’ is a free gift that we do not deserve. Because of His divine love for His children (those who believe in Jesus Christ), not only are we clothed in the righteousness of Christ (Revelation 22:14), but also - with a repentant heart - all our sins are forgiven and forgotten (Psalm 103:12; 1 John 1:9), as though they had never happened:

> For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His loving devotion for those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.
>
> Psalm 103:11–13 (BSB)

II - Why Jesus?

So why Jesus? Why not some other religion? Some people believe that *all* roads lead to God, but the Bible states that is not the case. Jesus clearly tells us the following:

> Jesus answered, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”*
>
> John 14:6 (BSB)

Jesus is the Son of God, and He came into the world to give those who believe in Him right standing with God (Romans 5:1, 8-11), as well as eternal salvation (John 3:16). He gave His life for us - so that we could have a personal relationship with God. The prophet Isaiah describes what Jesus endured on our behalf:

> Surely He took on our infirmities and carried our sorrows; yet we considered Him stricken by God, struck down and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him,

and by His stripes we are healed. We all like sheep have gone astray, each one has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:4–6 (BSB)

Jesus suffered on our behalf, and bore all our sins on the cross. This is why it is *only through Him* that we can enter heaven (Matthew 7:13-14). He came at a time when we were powerless to do anything for ourselves, and unable to find favor with God (Romans 5:6-8). Because, we are born in sin, human beings are incapable not to sin. Thus, due to our sin nature, we are - by default - enemies of God. But through His grace, mercy and compassion, God sent His son Jesus Christ (in the likeness of mankind) to become the ultimate sacrifice for all who believe in Him. In that way, through Jesus' death on the cross, all sin is abolished for Christians (Romans 8:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Furthermore, as believers in Jesus, we have God's promise to watch over and guide our lives. Other religions may offer something similar, but there is no guidance, protection, or assurance. Most importantly, only Christianity is founded on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Likewise, it is only Christianity that correctly identifies sin and addresses it accurately, along with revealing the reality of spiritual warfare (Satan's lies and schemes).

Some try to compare Christianity with other religions, and mistakenly think Christianity is all about love (and go as far as quoting John 3:16). However, to only quote John 3:16 alone, is to quote it out of context. It is important to read the whole passage - John 3:16-21 to truly understand what the Bible is saying about the sin of mankind:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. And this is the verdict: The Light has come into the world, but men loved the darkness rather than the Light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come into the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever practices the

truth comes into the Light, so that it may be seen clearly that what he has done has been accomplished in God."

John 3:16–21 (BSB)

By contrast, all man-made religions worship idols of some kind. These may be created by people, such as inanimate objects. The worship of animals, as well as people, all of which are created by God, are also forms of idolatry. Worshiping the creature rather than the Creator (Isaiah 44:9-20), leads to eternal separation from God (hell). Paul mentions this in his letter to the Romans:

> The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. For what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from His workmanship, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking and darkened in their foolish hearts. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images of mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to impurity for the dishonoring of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is forever worthy of praise! Amen.
>
> Romans 1:18–25 (BSB)

Jesus is the Creator of all things (Genesis 1:1; John 1:3-4; Revelation 4:11), and He is eternal and holy (Revelation 4:8), and that is why we should have reverence for Him as our Creator, and the one and only God.

III - Heaven and Hell

In addition, as part of the gospel, the Bible talks a lot about hell (also referred to as the 'lake of fire'). This is 'a place of unquenchable fire - where the worms never die' (Isaiah 66:24; Mark 9:45-48; Revelation 21:8). Jesus warns us in a parable about a rich man and a man named Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31, showing us the reality of heaven and hell. Thankfully, the Bible

also talks about heaven in Matthew 13, where Jesus uses different parables to describe what the kingdom of heaven is like (Matthew 13:31-32; 33; 44-45). The Bible also describes what heaven will be like in Revelation 21:1-7, 9-27; 22:1-5.

For those following a non-Christian worldview or religion - it is imperative that you investigate the truthfulness of the Bible. This is the only way to recognize the uniqueness of God's Word, and its factuality. The Bible is not a 'storybook' written by someone, but it is a historically accurate account of God's creation of the universe, world, and everything in it, including mankind. Scripture reveals God's omnipotence (all-powerful), omniscience (all-knowing), omnipresence (everywhere present), compassion, love and sovereignty (in control of all things). The Bible was written by godly men through the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21). Although it was written over two thousand years ago, it is still relevant today.

In view of this, you need to ask yourself the following questions about your own religious beliefs: Is there something I have to do, or work towards? If so, what do I have to do, and for how long? Do you worship an idol (an image created by man) or a creature (animal, fish, etc.)? Are you certain about your eternal security? Do you know what will happen to you when you die, and where you are going to spend eternity?

Truthfully consider these questions, and do not be in a rush to answer them. Be honest with yourself - and think about the grace, mercy, security, love, compassion, forgiveness, salvation, eternal life (in heaven), blessings, peace, protection, guidance, and assurance you can have through faith in Jesus Christ - the Son of God. The only work that Jesus requires of you, is to believe in Him:

> Jesus replied, *"The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent."*
>
> John 6:29 (BSB)

Note: As you consider the ‘good news,’ the truth about Jesus Christ, the reality of heaven and hell, and are not a follower of Jesus Christ, you can surrender to Him by using the sample prayer found in Appendix C.

CHAPTER 2

Bondage to Sin

Jesus replied, *“Truly, truly, I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”*
John 8:34 (BSB)

I - Origin of Sin

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). We are not sure when this happened, since the Bible does not tell us. What the Bible does tells us is that the earth and the heavens and everything in them were created by God. Human beings were also a part of this creation - mankind was created in the image of God, and God said that it was very good (Genesis 1:31). As the Bible tells us in Genesis 3, sin entered into the world. Tempted by Satan, Adam and Eve committed the first sin, disobeying God’s explicit command not to eat of the fruit from the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:16-17). This was the fall of mankind. Since then, every man and woman born, is born in sin. There is nothing we can do (in and of ourselves) to change or fix that. That is why what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross is so significant, because He was the only One able to atone for our sins, since He was born sinless.

What is sin? It is a manifestation of evil. Ephesians 6:10-18 tells us that our struggle is not against people in and of themselves (‘flesh and blood’) but against evil rulers, authorities, and powers of this dark world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12). Because of this, we are commanded to put on the whole armor of God every day as a protection against all forms of evil. Read Ephesians 6:10-18 daily before you start your day. Make it part of your daily prayer routine. In that way, you become more aware of ongoing spiritual warfare. This is a battle that *only Jesus* can fight for us.

Every day we face various temptations. As a result of our own broken sin nature, we can succumb to these temptations (read about King David’s temptation in 2 Samuel 11-12:20). Some people may think that God is tempting them, as a way of testing their faith, but God does not tempt anyone, nor is He tempted by evil. A temptation may arise from our broken self (our sin nature), or from Satan (the devil) or from a combination of both. James 1:13-15 sums it up - when he says that our own evil desires lure us away and entice us. After the desire is conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

We are all guilty of this from time to time. So how can we resist temptations? By doing God’s will. When facing temptations of any kind, we must stop and ask ourselves these questions (inspired by Charles F. Stanley):

Does my choice bring me closer to God? Can I do this in Jesus' name? Does my choice honor God? Remember, that God is sovereign and knows all things and sees all things. There is nothing hidden from God. Hebrews 10:35-36 encourages us to persevere and to place our confidence in God's promises. Keep in mind, that God is faithful and immutable (unchanging), and he will always provide an escape from temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13).

In addition to this, Jesus also looks after us (Hebrews 4:14-16). Since Satan and our own broken sin self are the main reasons why we struggle with temptations of any kind, we must always be on guard. There are some people who think that Satan does not exist and that he is some kind of illusion. But the Bible tells us and warns us that Satan *is real* and until the day when Jesus Christ returns, he will try to wreak havoc in this world, in order to take with him as many people as he can to hell.

II - Satan and Sin

Who is Satan (the devil)? Jesus describes him in John 8:44 when he says:

> *"You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out his desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, refusing to uphold the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, because he is a liar and the father of lies."*
>
> John 8:44 (BSB)

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul refers to Satan as someone who masquerades as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). So we must be careful. Note, that It was not always that way. Satan (also called *Lucifer*, which is Latin meaning 'light-bringer' or 'morning star') was once an angel of God - but that changed. The Bible describes Satan in Ezekiel 28:12-15:

> (…) the Lord GOD says: 'You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God. Every kind of precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald. Your mountings and settings were crafted in gold, prepared on the day of your creation. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for I had ordained you. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked among the fiery stones. From the day you were created you were blameless in your ways— until wickedness was found in you.
>
> Ezekiel 28:12–15 (BSB)

Therefore, as a fallen angel, Satan is now an enemy of God and ours as well (Ezekiel 28:15-19). You may ask - Why should I be concerned about him? Because, he is a formidable enemy, capable of great harm and *only* Jesus Christ can deal with him on our behalf. As a result of His death and resurrection, Christ has conquered Satan, sin, death, and all evil.

Matthew 4:1-11, and Luke 4:1-13 tell us about Jesus being tempted by the devil in the wilderness. The temptation was real. Yet, Jesus did not sin, because He defended Himself by quoting Scripture. The devil did not stand a chance and left Him. We must do the same thing. When temptations assail us, quoting Scripture back to our evil thoughts and sinful desires is a good way of arming ourselves with truth and letting God fight our battles for us.

III - Dealing With Sin

It is important that we examine ourselves regularly, and that we are honest with ourselves with regards to our sins. We are born as slaves to sin which leads to death, but there is freedom from sin in Jesus Christ and *only in Him* (Hebrews 2:14-15). We may struggle with giving up some sins in our lives, because we actually enjoy them. However, in our hearts the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sins, so there may be feelings of heaviness, foreboding and guilt in our hearts that we cannot shake on our own. Why? Because God cares for us and wants us to confess and repent of our sins in order to free us from the bondage of sin. King David wrote in Psalm 32:4, “For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was drained as in the summer heat” (BSB). Having repented of our sins to Jesus with sincere hearts, He forgives *all of our transgressions* and He removes the feelings of heaviness, foreboding, and guilt (Psalm 32:5).

Repentance restores our relationship with Jesus. As a result, there is a feeling of freedom, rest, and peace, because Jesus has lifted the burden from your heart through His forgiveness (Matthew 11:28-30). The Bible promises us:

> But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God’s right hand. There he waits until his enemies are humbled and made a footstool under his feet. For by that one offering he forever made perfect those who are being made holy. And the Holy Spirit also testifies that this is so. For he says, “This is the new covenant I will make with my people on that day, says the LORD: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.” Then he says, “I will never again remember their

sins and lawless deeds." And when sins have been forgiven, there is no need to offer any more sacrifices.

Hebrews 10:12–18 (NLT)

Pride is a major contributor to unrepentant sin. We may feel that what we are doing is not harming anyone, and that there are worse things out there, but this is a fallacy. Our hearts are veiled and we cannot see past our sin. This is why we must examine ourselves regularly to see if there is any pride or selfishness in us. The Holy Spirit helps us identify where the issues are, so that we can immediately repent (Proverbs 28:13). Remember that a person can always be too prideful, but *never* too humble.

Be aware though, that humility does not mean being a door mat for someone to walk on. Simply put, humility is the absence of pride - a childlike posture. When we approach God with a childlike stance, and not with an attitude of pride, we keep our hearts open for God to communicate with us, teach us, reveal Himself to us (Luke 10:21), and intercede on our behalf.

Thus, with heart of humility, we can come to the Father in repentance, asking for forgiveness, and He will forgive us (1 John 1:9). There will always be confession and repentance through prayer to our Lord Jesus Christ, as long as we live in this world. Not only will we be asking Jesus to forgive us of our sins, but what is equally important, is that we forgive others of their sins against us (since unforgiveness is a sin in and of itself). Likewise, we also ask Jesus to help us forgive ourselves.

Consistent Bible reading helps us overcome sin. Likewise, prayer helps us to connect with God. Jesus teaches us how to pray:

"So then, this is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'"

Matthew 6:9–13 (BSB)

This is a great prayer for you to memorize. It honors our heavenly Father, asking for God's daily provision and His forgiveness of our sins. It also, reminds us to forgive others. Likewise, this prayer keeps us aware of spiritual warfare and protects us from Satan's temptations. You can also use this prayer as a template/guideline to create an expanded version of your own prayer.

IV - Summary

In sum, we now know where our sin nature originated and that we are all sinners from birth. In all of this, there is no room for pride, since pride is sin and sin leads to death and eternal separation from God the Father. Sin is destructive, painful, physically debilitating, evil, it is the cause of worry, anxiety and fears. It hinders us from having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

When dealing with sin (or any kind of 'habitual sin'), it is important that we deal with it head-on and not try to downplay it or pretend that it does not exist. Left unaddressed, it can affect us emotionally, physically and may affect our relationships with others. Furthermore, sin can lead to bitterness and hard-heartedness. A person's conscience can become dull over time and we no longer hear God, and we may not feel the Holy Spirit convicting us. This is a dangerous place to be, and we should avoid it at all costs.

It is vital that we ask God for forgiveness, and also forgive ourselves. We cannot change the past, but we can look to the saving work Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, and ask for his help now and for the future, letting go of the past.

It is only through Jesus Christ that we receive forgiveness of sins and find true freedom. So cling to the cross - lay all your sins at Jesus' feet in confession and repentance. As our brother Paul wrote to the Philippians:

> Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
>
> Philippians 4:6–7 (BSB)

CHAPTER 3

Habitual Sins - Why We Have Them - Understanding and Dealing With Our Sins

So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you have suffered physically for Christ, you have finished with sin. You won't spend the rest of your lives chasing your own desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God. You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy—their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols. Of course, your former friends are surprised when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild and destructive things they do. So they slander you. But remember that they will have to face God, who stands ready to judge everyone, both the living and the dead.
1 Peter 4:1–5 (NLT)

What is 'habitual sin,' (or, as secular society has labeled it 'addiction')? Society looks at 'addiction,' as a disease, a disorder that is compulsive, chronic, or habit forming, but based on Christian beliefs and what the Bible - says in truth - it is actually a form of 'slavery to sin' (John 8:34). Without Jesus Christ, this often leads to physical, spiritual, and emotional damage, because you become a slave to whatever it is that controls you (2 Peter 2:19). For this reason, a biblical response is required.

Why do we have 'habitual sins'? Not all people suffer from more severe forms of 'habitual sin.' Those who experience a degree of 'habitual sin,' whether mild or severe, are trying to fill a void of some kind. It could be feelings of: inadequacy, low self-esteem, uselessness, emptiness, loneliness, wanting to be accepted, feeling unloved, emotional (or physical) pain, an unhealthy desire, lust, unfulfillment, anger (at someone else, themselves, or God), profane/vulgar/abusive language, rejection, guilt, shame, regret, jealousy, pride, personal loss, distress/suffering, etc.

So people try to fill the void, with something that either brings them momentary pleasure, or temporarily numbs the pain. This is always a short-lived form of escape. Yet, as the feelings, problems or situations persist, so does the form of escape. If left unchecked, a person may develop a dependency on it - developing into 'habitual sin.'

Here are some of the ways people try to escape (to name just a few), and there may also be some overlap between them:

Alcohol	Drugs/Substance abuse	Relationships ('family')	Hoarding

Cell Phones	Internet/Social Media, etc.	Sex/Pornography	Overeating
Gambling	TV, Video, Music, etc.	Fornication/Adultery	Shopping
Dating	Binge watching	Gossip	Video Games
Rock/Pop Idols	Beauty, Fitness, Lifestyle	Materialism	Working/ Career
Competing	Relationships (‘friends’)	Narcissism	Greed
Money	Relationships (‘acquaintances’)	Lust	

How do I know if I have a problem? If you are spending an excessive amount of time, energy, or money on anything that ends up interfering with your everyday life, your relationships with other people, and especially your relationship with God, you must stop and ask yourself: Why am I doing this? Check your heart to see if there are any strong desires (emotions/feelings) attached to what you are doing. Also, taking a personal inventory of a typical day or week in your life, to help you see (when you are not working, or at school), where and how you spend the bulk of your time. What occupies your thoughts most of the day? How do you spend your time off (when you are not working or at school)? This can help you identify if there is a potential problem (Matthew 6:19-24).

Biblically speaking, time spent excessively on anything - is a sin. There should be nothing in this life that we desire more than Jesus Christ:

> Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives.
>
> Galatians 5:24–25 (NLT)

God created us to have a relationship with Himself. There should be no thing, or person in this world, that we would want more than anything causing us to distance ourselves from Jesus. This does not mean that we cannot have people and things in our lives - but Jesus must always be first in our hearts, and everything else should take second place (Matthew 6:33).

Putting all of our hopes, dreams, and desires in people, places, and things, is a form of idolatry. What is an idol? Answer: Anything that takes the place of God in our hearts and lives - anything that we put before Him - anything, that we worship other than the one and only God - Jesus Christ (John 14:6). Paul tells us that there can be no compromise between the temple of God (believers), and idols (the people/things of this world):

> What agreement can exist between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people.” “Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” And: “I will be a Father to you, and you will be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”
> 2 Corinthians 6:16–18 (BSB)

Therefore, be careful what you focus your thoughts on. A heart bent towards God is best:

> *“A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart.”*
> Luke 6:45 (NLT)

In this world, there are idols everywhere. Some of them may be big, bold and in your face, while others can be very subtle and unobtrusive. ‘Habitual sin,’ is a form of idolatry, and can express itself through our desires to indulge, or participate in, ungodly behaviour (reread the opening verses above from 1 Peter 4:1-5). No one gets away with sin and there are always consequences. Some feelings can be strong and seemingly impossible to overcome. This is why we need Jesus Christ in our lives to strengthen us. The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin(s) and helps us confess and repent (1 John 1:9) as believers. The Holy Spirit is our guide and always leads us into God’s best for our lives (1 John 4:4-6). James puts it this way:

> But each one is tempted when by his own evil desires he is lured away and enticed. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, with whom there is no change or shifting shadow.
> James 1:14–17 (BSB)

You may have been able to conceal your ‘habitual sin’ over the years, but there comes a time when the truth surfaces. Either you have identified an issue, or somebody else has brought it to your attention (i.e. a family member, a close friend, fellow co-worker, or boss, etc.). This process may be painful. Therefore, soberly ask yourself, what am I doing that is keeping me from God’s best? If deep down in your heart, you are in agreement with what you have heard, then this is good - you are now on your way to recovery with Christ’s help.

At this point, the Important thing is not to feel hopeless and become discouraged. So you may be wondering what the next step is. This is where confession, repentance, and asking Jesus to help you in prayer, plays a major role in your recovery process (see chapter 4). Surrender everything to Jesus. There isn't *anything* you cannot give up. There is no excuse for not living a godly life. The Bible reassures us of God's love and support in times of need:

> Then I realized that my heart was bitter, and I was all torn up inside. I was so foolish and ignorant— I must have seemed like a senseless animal to you. Yet I still belong to you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, leading me to a glorious destiny. Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth. My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever.
>
> Psalm 73:21–26 (NLT)

If you are dealing with an issue involving any kind of drug or substance abuse, alcoholism, or smoking - at this point - it is important to seek some form of medical assistance, or a detox program. For 'habitual sins,' not requiring any form of detox, etc., you may be thinking about other programs/support groups. Christian counselling may also be an option. Regardless, as you explore any of these approaches, you need to ask yourself some important questions:

Is this program/support group, Bible-based, Christ-centered?

> Jesus answered, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*
>
> John 14:6 (BSB)

Do they place other worldviews above Christianity? (If yes, then a different option may be better)

> Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. For many false prophets have gone out into the world.
>
> 1 John 4:1 (BSB)

Are *you* required to do all the work, or are you encouraged to rely on Jesus Christ?

> *"I am the vine and you are the branches. The one who remains in Me, and I in him, will bear much fruit. For apart from Me you can do nothing."*
>
> John 15:5 (BSB)

Is there a Bible-based, Christ-centered foundation, or are there only man-made rules to follow?

> By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one must be careful how he builds. For no one can lay a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.
>
> 1 Corinthians 3:10–11 (BSB)

Is there an element of worship, encouraging praying to Jesus Christ?

> This Jesus is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.’ Salvation exists in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”
>
> Acts 4:11–12 (BSB)

Is there accountability to God (specifically, to Jesus Christ)?

> It is written: “As surely as I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow before Me; every tongue will confess to God.” So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.
>
> Romans 14:11–12 (BSB)

Be aware, that many programs/support groups are often fashioned off of other programs. They usually address the symptoms, but not the cause. Unfortunately, they fail to deal with the void, which is why people are experiencing ‘habitual sin’ in the first place. There may be what initially appears to be a sense of success in the life of the person participating in a program, but usually this is short-lived. Why? Because the *cause* is not addressed and is left untreated. The void remains, since Jesus is not part of the solution.

As a result, a person is often advised to rely on things like ‘self-will,’ ‘positive thinking,’ ‘meditation,’ ‘taking control of their lives,’ etc. In reality, though, Satan has veiled the hearts of people to the truth of Christ. Consequently, a person is powerless over sin (which is the underlying problem). The apostle Paul illustrates this struggle in the following passage:

> We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do. But what I hate, I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I admit that the law is good. In that case, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh; for I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do. Instead, I keep on doing the evil I do not want to do. And if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So this is the principle I have discovered: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law. But I see another law at work in my body, warring against the law of my mind and holding me captive to the law of sin that dwells within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I serve the law of God, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.
>
> Romans 7:14–25 (BSB)

Who can help us here? Only, in Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit can we overcome our 'habitual sin(s)' (Romans 8:11). This is due to the fact that Jesus Christ, having been crucified, having died on the cross to atone for our sins, was raised from the dead three days later (the resurrection). Thereby, He conquered sin, all evil, Satan, and death for those who will ever believe in Him. In that way, Jesus gives us right standing with God, along with the gift of eternal life in heaven.

It Is Important to think about the aforementioned questions, especially if you are considering joining any kind of program/support group. If you are already a member of a program/support group, you may still want to ask yourself these questions, and see if you need to make some changes.

Staying in a program for any length of time, only to find yourself right back where you started, can be very discouraging. But have faith - there are other alternatives, and God will guide you in the right direction. Ask Him in prayer, and expect His best for you, and He will honor your trust in Him (Proverbs 3:5-6).

If you have a close godly Christian friend, or someone in your family who is a believer to support you, ask them to pray with you for Jesus' guidance. If you belong to a Bible-based Christ-centered church, you may want to talk with your pastor and ask him to help you through this, or to refer you to another option/resource that you may not have thought about.

Remember, Jesus is the ‘Great Physician.’ He healed *all* who were in need, and He can heal you as well (Matthew 12:15-16; 14:14; 15:30-31; Luke 4:38-41; 6:19). There is not anything too difficult, or too hard, that God cannot handle. There is not any sin too horrible, that He will not forgive, if you come to Him with a humble and repentant heart. He created you and knows everything about you - even your darkest secrets. The Lord is with you wherever you go, so you are never alone. He made you, and He can heal you.

The following is part of a psalm that you may want to memorize for encouragement:

> O LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I’m far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, LORD. You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand! I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there. If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me. I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night—but even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are the same to you. You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother’s womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it.
>
> Psalm 139:1–14 (NLT)

To sum up, consider, the fact that today a lot of ‘habitual sin(s),’ that we suffer from have been given man-made labels that identify them as a ‘disease’ of some kind. These labels sometimes have a suffix attached to them such as ‘-addict,’ or ‘-ism.’ As a result, there is a certain stigma attached to every label, linked to the worldviews they are based on, and unfortunately, these views are not biblical. This can be misleading and confusing for the person who is currently dealing with a ‘habitual sin’ in their life, since they may feel that they may be suffering from some form of ‘disease,’ or ‘addiction,’ when in truth it is ‘habitual sin.’ Thus, be careful, not to buy into any preconceived worldview, so that you are not drawn into

trying to focus on the symptoms, when in reality, the void (or cause), needs to be addressed. Without Jesus, it is not going to work.

CHAPTER 4

Sin - Repentance - Guilt - Forgiveness

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.
1 John 1:9 (NLT)

Ever since the Fall of mankind - in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3), sin entered into the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve. As a result, all people are born in sin. But God in His grace, made it possible for people to atone for their sins through the sacrifices of animals, as we learn in the Old Testament. However, these sacrifices were ongoing - daily, weekly, yearly. Countless animals (lambs, sheep, goats, cattle, etc.) were offered on the altar as sacrifices to atone for the sins of the people. This went on for hundreds of years, but it was only a foreshadowing of the ultimate sacrifice to come - Jesus Christ - the sinless spotless Lamb of God.

Christ's sacrificial death on the cross would be the final and last sacrifice needed - the *only* sacrifice God required - to atone for the sins of all mankind, past, present and future. Hence, Jesus' crucifixion, death, and resurrection, atoned for the sins of *all who would believe in Him*. He also conquered Satan, sin, evil, and death, so that we, as His children (believers), are saved through Him.

Today, many people are unaware of the meaning, nature and reality of sin. They feel that the word 'sin' does not apply to them, because they think that it is only those who have committed heinous crimes that have sinned. But that is not true. "What then *is* sin?" Broadly speaking, sin is prideful rebellion against Holy God (Jeremiah 17:9-10; Mark 7:20-23; Romans 1:18-3:20). In short, sin, is the 'absence of good.' While this may sound simple, the 'absence of good' can take on many forms - from a lie to murder. As such, from God's perspective, you don't have to commit a crime to have sinned.

Known and unbeknownst to us, we sin against God, ourselves and others daily. Sin begins in our thinking, then a desire is conceived in our hearts, and that in turn gives birth to sin (James 1:13-15). The Bible tells us that not one of us is good (Romans 3:10-12). This may be hard to hear, but remember, we were all born in sin as a result of the 'Fall' (Genesis 3), and we are also dealing with spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-12).

In the Old Testament, God specifically gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) as a divine set of rules for everyday life.

Although these commandments were given to the Israelites thousands of years ago, they are still relevant and apply to us today.

In the New Testament, Jesus simplified the Ten Commandments when He said:

> Jesus replied, *"The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only LORD. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these."*
>
> Mark 12:29–31 (NLT)

The first four commandments describing our relationship with God are dealt with in Jesus' statement - *"The LORD our God is the one and only LORD. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength."*

The last six commandments describing our relationship to other people are summed up in His statement - *"The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"*

Due to our sin nature, every sin we commit is against the holiness of God. As a result, in this life, we will never be truly sinless. Now that we understand what sin is and realize that we are sinners, what does the Bible require us to do? Repent. What is repentance? 'Repentance' is agreeing with God that we have sinned against Him, along with a willingness to turn from our sin. Repentance does not happen in our own strength or willpower. It is only the grace of Jesus Christ that makes it possible.

Repentance can only be accomplished with a humble and surrendered heart to Jesus. As we turn to Jesus in prayer, He provides true forgiveness (2 Chronicles 7:14). The Bible has many examples of repentant people. King David (who wrote most of the Psalms, is one of them). In Psalm 51, he repented of his sin against God. He wrote this Psalm after his affair with Bathsheba.

There are some people who do not consider what they are doing to be sinful. In fact they even feel justified in their sins. They believe that what they are doing is not "hurting anyone." They are reluctant to give up sinful activities because of the momentary pleasure these sins offer. This is a state of unrepentance and a form of pride - a belief that "I know what I am doing,"

and “I am in control,” or “I know what is best for me.” Their unrepentance is a sin against God and there are always consequences.

What is unrepentance? In essence, unrepentance is an unwillingness to change, as well as not seeking God for forgiveness. Such attitude is a form of pride (rebellion against God). Prolonged unrepentance can dull a person’s conscience. Eventually, what that person is doing, hurts others and even themselves. In the Bible, Judas Iscariot (Jesus’ betrayer) is an example of an unrepentant person (Matthew 27:3-5). Instead of seeking God, and asking for forgiveness - he committed suicide.

Unrepentant sin can lead to feelings of shame, guilt, anxiety, and bitterness etc. It can even interfere with a person’s health and ability to function over time. So it is important for us to examine ourselves to see if there is any form of unrepentance in our hearts (2 Peter 1:10-11). Feelings of guilt, are a good indication to consider what is causing that guilt. What is guilt? Feelings of shame - a troubled conscience for sins we have knowingly committed - and any violation of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17).

If we are unaware of our sin(s), we can pray to Jesus and ask Him to reveal to our hearts any unrepentant sin to our hearts so we can ask for His forgiveness, and let Him free us of all guilt and shame. If you are aware of what is causing your guilt, it is important that you come to terms with it, admit that what you did was a sin and *immediately* turn it over to Christ in repentance (Psalm 32:5).

In addition, be aware, that there is also ‘false guilt.’ These are feelings of shame and a troubled conscience for sins committed *against us*. It is important to identify the difference between ‘genuine guilt’ and ‘false guilt’ (Romans 8:1). Some people suffer unnecessarily with ‘false guilt’ for many years and it takes time for these wounds to heal. There may be physical scars in addition to emotional scars. Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things, and He created you - mind, body, and soul. For this reason, healing is available only through Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit:

> Large crowds came to Him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and laid them at His feet, and He healed them.
>
> Matthew 15:30 (BSB)

Remember, there is not anything too big that God cannot handle. The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are filled with examples of Jesus’ healing. Although, Jesus is not physically here - for those with a repentant heart, He works in and through the Person and power of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes our Lord also works through other people, and situations to heal us - body, mind, and soul. People may ask, “Are there still miracles today?”

The answer is “Yes.” Yet, it may not look the same as in biblical days, since there are no Apostles today.

Nevertheless, when we pray to God with wholehearted prayers in humility and repentance, laying our requests before Him, He hears us (Psalm 5:1-3). There is nothing to prevent God from healing us (1 Peter 5:6-7). If for whatever reason, God does not heal a specific illness, we are assured that He always hears the prayers of His children. And at the very least, He is always in the process of softening our hearts sanctifying us as believers and helping us to ‘sin less’ (Romans 8:35-37; 2 Corinthians 12:7–9; Hebrews 11:39-40).

Therefore, it is important that we constantly examine ourselves where sin is concerned. Note, that any form of unforgiveness is a sin. This includes unforgiveness towards ourselves, other people and God. Why? Because God commands us to forgive those who sin against us.

The Bible tells us to forgive others in the gospel of Matthew:

> *“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive yours.”*
> Matthew 6:14–15 (BSB)

There are some who may find it difficult to forgive others, because they may have been badly hurt, rejected, betrayed, abused, slandered, etc., possibly even in a church community. These people wrongly believe that by harboring feelings of resentment, unforgiveness, and pain they are somehow punishing the one who hurt them. Unfortunately, they are causing themselves more harm than the person who hurt them. Unforgiveness can cause feelings of bitterness, hardness of heart, anxiety, and can even physically harm us in the long term.

Without being aware of it, we may express our unforgiveness, bitterness and hardness of heart in our interactions with friends and loved ones. Our views may become tainted, and we may express feelings of negativity. Meanwhile, the person who has hurt us may be completely unaware of what they have done. For this reason, we *must* take our feelings of unforgiveness to Jesus and share with Him exactly what is on our hearts. In the book of Romans, Paul tells us that we are not to avenge ourselves, but are to leave room for God to take care of the situation (Romans 12:19-21). If we stay in a state of unforgiveness, our relationship with Christ suffers.

It is important to remember that forgiveness frees us from *all* feelings of bitterness, pain, hostility, guilt, shame and keeps our hearts soft. We are to let God fight our battles for us. This takes the pressure off of us, so that we can have and enjoy a restored relationship with our Lord:

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

Colossians 3:12–13 (NLT)

CHAPTER 5

Prayer

But the news about Jesus spread all the more, and great crowds came to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses. Yet He frequently withdrew to the wilderness to pray.
Luke 5:15–16 (BSB)

I - What Is Prayer

Do you have a prayer life? Or, would you say that you are one of those people who pray only when there is a crisis of some kind, or when you desperately need something to work out? Maybe, you only pray when you are in church, being led by another member or the pastor of the church. There are some Christians who do not really have a prayer life, but when asked, are quick to say, “Yes, I pray.” They mistakenly believe that the occasional prayer here and there constitutes a prayer life.

Other Christians, when asked, may say “Yes, I do pray, but I am not sure if I am doing it right.” Others may respond, “I am not sure what prayer is.” What is prayer? Prayer is direct communication with God. This communication was made possible for us through the sacrificial atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus made it possible for us to have a relationship with God.

At our Lord’s crucifixion and death, when the curtain was torn in the temple (Matthew 27:51), it signified that the barrier between us and God was removed, and that we are now free to approach the Father, through Christ, in prayer - with a repentant heart. The moment we believe in Jesus Christ, we are immediately indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Christ’s shed blood on the cross, clothes us in His righteousness (Romans 8:10-11).

II - The Purpose of Prayer

What is the purpose of prayer? The main purpose of prayer is to intimately communicate with Jesus. Time spent with God in prayer, encourages us, strengthens us, and brings us feelings of peace and contentment. This is valuable and intimate time spent with our loving God and Creator. It is an opportunity for us to ask for forgiveness of our sins, to thank Him for all He has provided, and to lay all our requests and concerns at His feet. The following is a verse you should memorize:

> Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can

> understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.
>
> Philippians 4:6–7 (NLT)

As His child, you can talk to God about anything that is on your mind and heart. He is *always* there to listen and He is *always* faithful, and non-judgmental about whatever we tell him (Psalm 91:4). We can come to him freely with our feelings of shame, embarrassment, guilt, anxiety - whatever the feelings may be. Our Lord is always happy to hear from us and welcomes us with open arms. The key here is to come to Him *at all times*.

Why do we pray? We pray to keep the lines of communication open between ourselves and Jesus. God is sovereign and knows everything about us - past, present, and future. He is all powerful, and the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). Thus, it would be foolish *not* to come to Jesus with our daily concerns, since we have no idea what lies ahead. When we pray, we receive strength, courage, protection, guidance, and blessings to meet the needs of the day or the situation (Psalm 5:1-3). Importantly, prayer reassures us that we are not alone (Psalm 28:7), and that whatever we may be facing, Jesus will guide us along the way (Psalm 23).

You may be asking yourself, if God already knows everything about us, why do we still need to pray? The reason for this is that God created us to have a relationship with Him. We are His children and just like any loving parent who has children, you want to have a relationship with them. Note, that even if our earthly parents do not care about us, we should remember that God still loves us (Psalm 27:10). This is because of His divine, unconditional love (*agape* love).

Furthermore, prayer is another way to get to know Christ. Yes, we can read about Jesus in the Bible and learn about His thoughts and character. However, He wants us to know Him in an intimate way. This can only be accomplished through complete surrender in prayer. In this process, the Holy Spirit helps us grow in our personal relationship with Christ. The best way to go about this is to approach our Heavenly Father with a childlike trust and faith (Luke 10:21).

III - How to pray

How do I pray? The Bible has many examples of how to pray. For one, prayer is personal and is different for each individual. We are called to approach the throne of God’s grace in humility, reverence and awe. Using fancy words, or even quoting verses from Scripture, are not what counts. What matters most is a humble heart bent towards God. Jesus reminds us:

> *“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to*

> *be seen by men. Truly I tell you, they already have their full reward. But when you pray, go into your inner room, shut your door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not babble on like pagans, for they think that by their many words they will be heard. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him."*
>
> Matthew 6:5–8 (BSB)

In addition, Jesus also taught his disciples to pray this prayer:

> *"So then, this is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'"*
>
> Matthew 6:9–13 (BSB)

Many believers know this one by heart. It is a good prayer to pray when you do not know what to pray for. In any given situation, you can always ask the Holy Spirit to pray on your behalf (Romans 8:26-27).

What do I say when I pray? Whatever is on your heart. Do not rely on structured prayers with fancy words. You can bear your heart to God fully and completely. You can talk to Him about the things that you would never even tell your closest friend. No matter how sinful, vile, graphic, hurtful your sins may be, Christ is there and waiting for you with open arms (1 John 1:9). He is ready to receive you and always willing to forgive you when you repent of your sins (Psalm 32:5).

Confession and repentance are imperative, but gratitude is just as important. We must come to our Lord with hearts of gratitude for the blessings He has given us (both physical and spiritual). Praying for the wellbeing of others is also an essential part of prayer. We also pray for protection, guidance, wisdom, and spiritual discernment. Along with these suggestions - there will of course be other things about your own life that you may want to pray for. There is no right or wrong here - all that matters is that your heart is open and receptive to the will of God.

How often should I pray? In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul encourages believers to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). This does not mean that you have to walk around praying all day long. Nevertheless, as your day unfolds, you may thank God quietly in your heart, for a certain situation, outcome, or maybe ask Him for help with something

else. Always go about *everything* in a prayerful manner. Your prayer could be as short as “Jesus, help me,” or “Thank you, Lord Jesus.” On top of that, memorizing and reciting Bible verses, is another way to pray. Memorizing Bible passages can help to strengthen you in times of need, especially as you are in the process of overcoming ‘habitual sin(s).’

Where do I pray? The great thing about prayer is that it can be done silently in your heart and mind, anywhere and at any time, without anyone knowing that it is happening. Prayer time (or quiet time) can happen at home. It can also be done anywhere else (e.g. in your car as you drive to and from work, on the bus, train, at your desk at work, or when you are out and about). You can pray whenever you feel the need. However, the best place to pray is in a quiet location with no distractions like TV, radio, computers, phones, etc. Best is a place at home where you are not interrupted. Being still, you can listen out for and hear God more easily (Psalm 46:10).

IV - How God Responds to Our Prayers

Does God listen to my prayers and will He answer my prayers? The answer to this is - ‘Yes.’ Some people may argue this point, because they feel that God did not answer their prayer, and therefore, He either did not hear them or He just does not care. But this is not true. God always hears and answers the prayers of His children. He does care, but it may not be the answer that we were expecting. Based on the factual events and revealed truth of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, you will see that God *always* answers the prayers of godly people. The answers usually fall under one of the following responses: ‘Yes,’ ‘No,’ ‘Wait,’ or ‘I have something better for you’ (inspired by Charles F. Stanley).

Let’s take a closer look at each of these responses. ‘Yes.’ There are some prayers where God may answer in a way that is in line with our request. In this case, it may be exactly what we had hoped for, or it may even be better than we had hoped. If what you are praying for is the will of God, then he will not hesitate to give it to you and sometimes even in abundance (James 1:5). Be aware though, that it will be done in *His* timing, not ours.

God may also respond, ‘No.’ This may upset you. But realize that God always knows what is best. Unlike us, God is sovereign and knows all things, He sees what lies ahead. As our loving Heavenly Father, Jesus knows how to give good things to His children (Matthew 7:11). Our Lord would not withhold anything from us that glorifies Himself and would bring us great joy.

In addition, there may be other factors for God saying ‘No.’ For example, it may be that what we asked for could become an idol in our lives. Saying ‘No’ may also be a means and a way of teaching us something or making us aware of something that needs to change inside of us. So it is

important for us to stop, and ask God the question, “Lord Jesus, what are you trying to teach me or show me here?” If you open your heart to Him in repentance, humility, and praise, He will reveal His answer to you. What matters most is to always give God the time He needs to show you.

Another response is ‘Wait.’ For most people, this response is very challenging. In a society where you can get almost anything instantly without waiting, it can be very difficult to wait for something that we feel we need, deserve, or want sooner. It is crucial that we understand the difference between ‘needs’ and ‘wants.’ A ‘need’ is something that is necessary for living - like food, water, shelter, and clothing, etc. God promises to meet those needs (Philippians 4:19).

In contrast to ‘needs,’ there are ‘wants,’ which are our, personal desires. Our desires may be physical, spiritual, and emotional. These ‘wants’ may or may not be fulfilled - depending on God’s will and plan for our lives. He not only looks after our ‘needs,’ but also takes care of our personal desires, if they line up with His will (Matthew 7:7-8).

Finally, God’s response may be, ‘I have something better for you.’ If we could see all the wonderful plans God has in store for us in the future, we would not worry about anything. When you think about your life in retrospect, try to remember times when you wanted something and had to wait for it. You may have had feelings like, “I am missing out,” yet, when things finally did work out, it was even better than what you expected. That is how our wonderful Heavenly Father operates! He works behind the scenes, putting everything into place so that you will be at the right place at the right time - not a minute too soon and not a minute too late. His timing is *always* perfect (1 Peter 5:6).

To summarize, having an established prayer life keeps us grounded when life becomes challenging. Christ is the only One who has the ability to deliver us from the difficult situations in life. He is our Best Friend, our Protector and the main source of *all* our needs (physical, spiritual and emotional). When we humbly surrender to Him in repentance, our Lord works on our behalf. That does not mean that life will always be smooth sailing, but it means that we will be able to withstand the storms of life with courage, strength, peace and joy through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

CHAPTER 6

Lifestyle Changes

“Beware of false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, by their fruit you will recognize them.”
Matthew 7:15–20 (BSB)

I - Preparing for change

If someone were to ask you today “What is a Christian?” Would you be able to say to them, “You are looking at one.” Based on what others know about you, would they see an example of what a true follower of Jesus Christ is? Would they see an example of a Christian based on the things you say, the way you live, the things you do (and do not do), and the way you conduct yourself around others?

There are a lot of people today who sincerely believe that they are Christians, and that they are living a Christian life. They believe that Christianity involves going to church once a week, participating in church activities, giving to the poor, and not getting into trouble with the law. Others believe because their parents and grandparents went to church, that makes them Christians.

While, all these things are useful, it does not - by default - mean that you are a follower of Jesus Christ (a Christian), since unbelievers do many of the same things. There are many false religions and cults that label themselves ‘Christian.’ So what sets Christians apart from other world religions? One, Jesus Christ is the only one who died and was raised back to life (the resurrection) (Acts 1:21-22, 2:31). Two, Jesus Christ is ‘God in the Flesh’ (Colossians 1:15-16). Three, once we have faith in Jesus and He is our personal Lord and Savior, we are permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17). However, if you look at other religions/cults, they do not have anything remotely comparable to this.

Christians not only believe in the birth, life, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but are obedient to His commands, because it pleases us to serve Him (John 8:31-32; James 1:22-25). As a result of the Holy Spirit residing in us, we naturally produce the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25). Once we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we are instantly sealed by the Holy Spirit and our names are written in the

‘Lamb’s Book of Life.’ A saved person cannot ‘lose’ their salvation (John 10:27-30).

All this does not apply to unbelievers:

For the LORD guards the path of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.
Psalm 1:6 (BSB)

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.
1 Corinthians 1:18 (BSB)

Unbelievers, are people - who, for whatever reason - *refuse* to believe in Jesus Christ. Their hearts and minds are veiled by the evil one (Satan). As a result, their hearts are hardened and they reject the Gospel message:

> Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don’t understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.
> 2 Corinthians 4:4 (NLT)

Considering the opening verse at the beginning of the chapter, unbelievers are not that easy to identify, as Jesus warns us in the Gospel of Matthew. They come to us wearing “sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.” Thus, we are to be careful, and not be too easily swayed by flattery and smooth talk, as this can be deceiving. Jesus tells us in the Bible that we will know them by their ‘fruit.’ “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.” So it is only through time and getting to know someone - seeing if a person is trustworthy - that we may possibly be dealing with a follower of Christ. Of course, only God knows what is in a man’s heart and we are not to judge others in this process, but we are to prayerfully go about it, asking the Holy Spirit for discernment, guidance and protection.

However, there are some Christians, new to the faith - who join a church - under the assumption that all attending are Christians like themselves. This can lead to great disappointment. A bad experience with ‘false’ believers may even cause a person to withdraw from attending that church - or any church for that matter.

Our Lord warns us that not everyone who ‘claims’ to be a Christian, is a believer. He knows the hearts of all people. Jesus puts it like this:

> *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness!’”*
>
> Matthew 7:21–23 (BSB)

Therefore, the church can be divided into two categories - the ‘visible church’, and the ‘invisible church.’ The ‘visible church,’ is who you see when you go to a physical building (i.e. a church, a meeting place, or rented space in a building). Here, believers and unbelievers are mixed together participating in worship. The ‘invisible church’ consists of believers who are still alive and those believers who have already gone to be with the Lord in heaven.

Because Jesus sees the hearts of all men, He knows who His followers are, and on the Day of Judgment, he will separate the believers from the unbelievers (Matthew 25:31-46). Remember, just because someone is in a church building, that does not mean that they are a believer. Some people only attend a church because they like the music, they can meet people, they like the free coffee and cookies, or they go as part of a family tradition. Meanwhile, their hearts are hardened, they are unrepentant and therefore not followers of Christ. These people are ‘unregenerate’ which means, they have heard the Gospel preached to them, and have chosen to walk away from it.

It Is only through humility, repentance, and faith in Jesus Christ, that we can receive forgiveness of our sins and healing. Jesus does not hear the prayers or requests of unbelievers. He only hears the prayers and requests of His children (Psalm 32:10-11). It is only through the work of the Person of the Holy Spirit within each Christian, that enables us to have faith in Jesus (John 3:7-8). The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sins and helps us overcome them. He also helps us discern between believers and unbelievers, which is vital for us in preparing for our lifestyle changes. We need to have a solid relationship with fellow Christians.

II - Making the Change

It is crucial to understand that a lifestyle change is only possible for believers in Jesus Christ. The question is, “Do you want to change how you are currently living your life?” If so, the first thing you need to establish in

your heart is, “Where is Jesus in my life?” He needs to be at the center of your life (Mark 12:29-31). Take an inventory of your everyday life and how you are living it. Remember, that whatever you have thought about in the past and are thinking about right now, is shaping your present and future situation.

Do you need to make changes to your way of thinking, words, and actions? Prayerfully ask God to help you (Psalm 119:35). Ask Jesus to guide you as you pray and read Bible. Since God knows and sees everything, He knows what changes you need to make. Nothing is hidden from Him, surrender all to Him and ask for the help you need (Hebrews 4:12-13). God is faithful (Hebrews 10:23), and will never leave you.

You may be asking yourself, “*Why* do I need to change the way I am currently living?” As Christians we want to honor and glorify God by the way we live our lives. This means surrendering our body, mind, and soul to Jesus so that He can work in and through us (John 15:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:19). Change is not easy, and we must trust God’s timing, not our own. That is why Paul admonishes us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Therefore, in whatever we choose to do, we must *always* ask our Lord for His help. When we pray wholeheartedly, He will withhold no good thing from us (Psalm 84:11-12). If we truly want to change our lives for the better, Jesus will make it happen (Matthew 19:26).

The key to all of this is patience. We must understand, that God’s timing is not our timing, and the Bible tells us to wait patiently on the Lord (Psalm 27:13-14). Waiting is an active process. It involves prayer, reading the Bible, and being still during our prayer time so we can hear God speaking to our hearts.

Keep in mind that the prayerful decisions you make, could lead to a potentially lonely road ahead (Matthew 7:13-14). But remember, you are not alone, because Jesus is with you at all times (Deuteronomy 31:8). He is the best friend you will *ever* have, and you can *always* trust Him.

The changes that you may have to make in your life could involve family, friends, acquaintances, co-workers, etc. It could be that you can no longer do life together with these people for various reasons. As a result, you may experience feelings of doubt, guilt, shame, heartbreak, anxiety, loneliness, fear, loss, and pain because of your decisions.

Nevertheless, consider the fact that you have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and, as such, some of the people in your life may not bring you closer to Christ, but instead pull you away from Him. This can happen by what they say or not say, by what they do or not do and how they make you feel. As you listen for God’s voice in

prayer, He will reveal to you if a person/people are part of the problem. Consider this Bible verse:

> There are “friends” who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother.
>
> Proverbs 18:24 (NLT)

Challenging as it may be, as Christ reveals it to you, you may have to let go of former relationships. The reason for this is in the Bible:

> So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you have suffered physically for Christ, you have finished with sin. You won’t spend the rest of your lives chasing your own desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God. You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy—their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols. Of course, your former friends are surprised when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild and destructive things they do. So they slander you. But remember that they will have to face God, who stands ready to judge everyone, both the living and the dead.
>
> 1 Peter 4:1–5 (NLT)

Jesus is fully aware of all the challenges you are facing. He knows all about the hurts of the past as well as those in the present. The Bible tells us that there will be divisions of every kind. Jesus explains:

> *“I have come to ignite a fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on, five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”*
>
> Luke 12:49–53 (BSB)

Walking away from any relationship can be frightening and can lead to feelings of intense loneliness (Psalm 34:18). Over the years, we may have developed an unhealthy reliance on a particular relationship(s) - even tolerating various forms of abuse - whether physical and/or emotional. If we battle with feelings of inadequacy or low self-esteem, we may have a tendency to tolerate situations or people in order to feel accepted or wanted.

In that way, by allowing the abuse to continue for fear of being alone, we compromise ourselves, our lives, and our faith.

Concerning relationships, we must ask: When does it end? How long should we allow things to go on? Will it ever stop? The answers to these questions have to be made by you with the help of Christ through prayer. If you have any support, such as a trusted Christian friend, or a pastor whom you can talk to in confidence, ask them to pray with you and for you (if you feel comfortable sharing your situation with them). Thus, it is helpful, if you have that kind of support, but not everyone has that kind of support.

There are many who may have to ‘go it alone’ (see Appendix D), with no friends or family to talk to. And yet, they are not alone, because their heavenly Father is always with them (Deuteronomy 31:6). We can find comfort in knowing that God always hears our prayers and comforts us in our time of need:

> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.
>
> 2 Corinthians 1:3–5 (BSB)

Whatever decisions you make - as you consider, if it is time to cut ties with certain people, always go about this prayerfully and ask God for wisdom and spiritual discernment to make the right decisions. These decisions should never be done in a rush (unless it is a life-threatening situation). At the right time, God will reveal what you need to know, guide you as to the best course of action, and give you the courage to do it.

Before any of this can be put into place, you need to ask yourself these questions: Are you ready to make the necessary changes? If not now, then when? Are you ready to surrender fully to Jesus and allow Him to fight your battles for you (Proverbs 3:5-6)? Do you believe that He wants the very best for you (Jeremiah 29:11-13)? Be honest with yourself and take time to carefully think about each question before you answer it - but most of all - pray, pray, pray (Joshua 1:8-9; Philippians 4:6-7).

For most people life changes are not easy. Give yourself time to adjust. You may go through a period of mourning over the loss of a relationship, or giving up sin(s) that at one time, you thought, brought you pleasure. At this point, it is very important that you are patient, kind, and loving to yourself. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), and so you

need to take care of yourself. You do this by resting in Christ, and letting Him heal you - especially during your time of mourning (Matthew 5:4).

In addition, there may also be feelings of guilt, shame, remorse, or feeling unloved - as if the world is against you, because of the decisions you have made. But remember, these are just thoughts and feelings. It is normal to encounter these emotions (you may feel some, or all of them), but keep in mind, that with God's help, you *will* overcome them.

In His perfect timing, God will restore you (Psalm 46:1). When emotions and negative thoughts surface, or if you are dealing with opposition of any kind as a result of your decisions, always speak Scripture back to yourself for encouragement (John 14:27). Remind yourself that you are a child of the Living God (Jesus Christ), who wants only the very best for you and who truly loves you unconditionally.

As you read your Bible regularly, try to commit your favorite verses to memory. In that way, you can always fall back on them when you need words of encouragement. Speak biblical truth back to nagging thoughts, as well as to feelings of guilt and shame, as a reminder of who you are in Christ. Remind yourself of what Christ did for you on the cross. If there is no one there to encourage us - we must encourage ourselves. In the book of Romans, Paul reminds us of the greatness of God's love for us:

> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
>
> Romans 8:38–39 (BSB)

CHAPTER 7

Setting Personal Goals - Preparing For The Road To Recovery

"…Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."
Joshua 1:8–9 (NLT)

At the beginning of every new year, there are some people who set so-called 'new year's resolutions' for themselves. It may be to give up something they are doing that is not good for them (e.g. unhealthy eating), or to initiate something they have been putting off for some time (e.g. going to the gym). Whatever the resolution may be, it often starts out promising.

People make an effort to keep it up for a few weeks - or even a few months, but for some reason it usually does not last. Why? It could be any number of reasons - loss of interest, the stresses of life, or maybe a setback of some kind, leading to a course change.

The same sort of thing can happen to a person who is trying to eliminate a 'habitual sin' in their life. It can be very difficult trying to navigate the stresses of life, peer pressure (from family, friends, or others), and anything else that may throw a curve in the process. We start out with good intentions, but they soon fade away and we become discouraged.

What is missing in all of this? More specifically, *Who* is missing here? Jesus Christ. If we have no relationship with the Lord Jesus, we can plan and affirm all the things we are going to do, but if God is not a part of the plan, it all turns to ashes. Therefore, if you are unsure how to begin setting personal goals, here are some pointers to help you get started:

- Confess and repent *all* sins in prayer to Jesus Christ (including your 'habitual sin(s) (1 John 1:9).
- Admit that you are unable to overcome sin in your own strength and need Jesus' help, protection and guidance (Psalm 32:5-8).
- Ask our Lord to reveal to you, how to go about setting personal goals for yourself (Jeremiah 29:11-13).
- Ask Jesus to show you, what - and possibly even who - you need to remove from your life (see chapter on Lifestyle changes) (Proverbs 16:9; Philippians 4:6-7).

- Sit down with pen and paper and prayerfully go about how you will set life changing goals for yourself (and what you want to achieve). Start with small goals and work up to bigger ones (Proverbs 19:21).
- Keep a journal to track your daily thoughts, feelings, and prayers. Not everyone is inclined to keep a daily journal, but you may want to try it for a few days, just to see how things work out. It is amazing how we tend to forget what happened just a couple of days ago.
- Do not set any deadlines for yourself, since this is a process as well as a spiritual battle and it will take time. Remember you are working *according to God's timeline*, not yours (2 Peter 3:8). Jesus will speak to your heart as to when and how things will happen (Galatians 6:9).
- Be careful about the advice you get from friends and family. They can only provide limited advice from a human perspective. Only God knows you best and only He knows past, present, and future, so ask Him to guide you throughout this whole process (Psalm 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:7; James 1:5).
- It is vital to spend more dedicated time with God in the Bible and in prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18), and to keep the lines of communication open. Avoid distractions (e.g. TV, cell phones, music, internet, etc.).
- Be careful what you read, listen to, what you watch, who you listen to, and where you go (adapted from Charles F. Stanley) (Matthew 26:41; 2 Timothy 2:22; James 1:12-14).
- Be patient with God, and especially with yourself. Open your whole being to Him and surrender fully to Him, heart and soul, allowing Him to change you from the inside out (Romans 12:2). This could be a rocky road (but it will be well worth it in the end), and you will thank God for it.
- Read the book of Psalms regularly, as it captures and relates to all our emotions and feelings. It provides comfort, spiritual healing, and emotional strengthening. God knows, and He cares (Psalm 91:14-16).
- Put on the whole armor of God daily (Ephesians 6:10-17)!

You can use these suggestions to develop a program that works best for you.

You may be in the process of coming off of drugs or substance abuse and are experiencing withdrawals, anxiety, low concentration, etc. Some of these pointers may or may not work for you at this moment in time, so try to work with what you can (1 Peter 5:6-7). Remember, this situation is not permanent, and with the help of Almighty God, it will pass in due time (Isaiah 41:10).

Also, it is important to rest and take good care of yourself, as you continue to work on forgiving others and yourself. This is a time when you will be working on letting go of any number of feelings such as guilt, shame, lust, greed, jealousy, grief, loss, loneliness, negative feelings, feelings of

disappointment/discouragement, etc. Your emotions may fluctuate and you may have feelings of fear, anxiety, restlessness or other emotions (which is normal). So take the opportunity (when possible), to sleep, take naps, or just sit and be still in a quiet place. Your main focus here is to let go of the past with the help of God:

> “Do not call to mind the former things; pay no attention to the things of old. Behold, I am about to do something new; even now it is coming. Do you not see it? Indeed, I will make a way in the wilderness and streams in the desert.
>
> Isaiah 43:18–19 (BSB)

> Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come!
>
> 2 Corinthians 5:17 (BSB)

Letting go of the past can be among the more challenging, and time consuming undertakings. Our past has helped to shape us into the person we are today. Everything that we do, say, feel, and think are related to our past experiences and upbringing - it is a part of who we are and it affects the choices that we make in life.

You have to let go of the past, so you can move forward. People who live in the past may become stagnant, unable to progress in life, become closed minded, unchangeable/inflexible, stuck in feelings of bitterness and unforgiveness. In addition, the past can also become an idol (i.e. “…in the good old days everything was better…”). This is not a great place to be. As a result, we become shelved - unable to renew our minds - and grow in our walk of faith with Christ. Paul explains:

> I don’t mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.
>
> Philippians 3:12–14 (NLT)

How do we forget the past? Even though the past is a permanent part of our memory, we can ask the Creator of all things (Jesus), to help us forget the painful events of the past (Genesis 41:51), as well as childhood/youth experiences (including abuse). In that way, the painful thoughts and

memories do not re-occur as often, and with time, we can expect them to subside altogether (Ezekiel 36:25-27). Jesus and the New Testament promise us:

> Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.
>
> Matthew 6:33–34 (NLT)

> So God’s rest is there for people to enter, but those who first heard this good news failed to enter because they disobeyed God. So God set another time for entering his rest, and that time is today. God announced this through David much later in the words already quoted: “Today when you hear his voice, don’t harden your hearts.”
>
> Hebrews 4:6–7 (NLT)

Furthermore, it is important that we keep track of our recurring thoughts, so we can pray to God specifically for healing and renewal. Keep in mind that a painful or abusive past can trigger a lot of different feelings and emotions. So when you are feeling or experiencing a negative emotion, you may want to think about where that may be coming from (most likely from the past). Our goal here is to persevere and not look back (Luke 9:57-62).

In addition to letting go of the past, another suggestion is walking - getting fresh air and sunshine to help lift the heart. In addition, it is a great way to be alone with God in prayer - whether in a quiet residential area, or a park. Try to take the opportunity (weather permitting) to get outside. Take your Bible with you if you can, and find a place where you can sit quietly and read.

Likewise, consider reading as a great way to learn more about who God is and how He has worked in the lives of other Christians. There are many books on church history, Christian biographies, and basic theology books for beginners, but be careful which ones you read. Not all books that claim they are ‘Christian,’ are Bible-based, and Christ-centered (Please see Appendix B at the end of the book for suggestions).

Finally, throughout this whole process it is important that we take our thoughts captive:

> For though we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh. The weapons of our warfare are not the weapons of the world. Instead, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

> We tear down arguments and every presumption set up against the knowledge of God; and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.
>
> 2 Corinthians 10:3–5 (BSB)

The Bible guides us as we take our thoughts captive. Although we cannot control the thoughts that come into our minds (or *when* they come into our minds), we can control what we do with them.

It is interesting to note, that modern science still does not fully understand how the brain works or what causes certain memories/thoughts to come to mind and why. What we do know is that our brains record every single event and experience from the time that we are born to the present. Therefore, our thoughts or memories may come from our past experiences, how we were raised, the environment we grew up in, what we have read, watched (i.e. TV, movies, etc.), our education, and our relationships (past, or present), etc.

Since it is impossible to capture the vast variety of thoughts of all people, only a short list of examples is mentioned here: destructive thoughts, evil thoughts, lustful thoughts, thoughts of revenge, memories of the past, thinking about the future, thoughts of fear, and worry. There may even be thoughts brought on by our own sin self, or the evil one, or a combination of both.

Thoughts of any kind can occur in our minds at any time (day or night), and often at the most inappropriate times. It can happen during a certain event or situation, which may trigger a memory about the past and may have nothing to do with that present event or situation. For example, you may be at a celebratory event, enjoying good food and conversation with friends and suddenly a very painful memory surfaces out of nowhere.

Regardless, of where the thought or memory came from, if it is a recurring thought and if it is particularly disturbing to you, it is important that you turn to God in prayer *immediately* and ask for His help to take your thoughts captive. Ask Him to remove the thought from your memory. God promises us:

> Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.
>
> Philippians 4:6–7 (NLT)

Taking our thoughts captive has its own challenges. It involves dedicated time with the Lord, a conscious effort on your part, due diligence, practice and prayer.

Here is an example of what a prayer could look like:

Lord Jesus,
Forgive me for this _____ thought.
I repent. Help me to take captive my thoughts and remove all thoughts of _____ from my mind and heart.
Of myself, I can do nothing, but with the help of the Holy Spirit, I can be free from these thoughts.
I place these thoughts at the foot of the cross, knowing that You will help me to overcome.
In Jesus name, I pray. Amen.

If you are struggling with ongoing thoughts or feelings of guilt/shame, read, and even memorize Psalm 32; 52; 103; 25:7, 16; 23, and read how Jesus forgives all of us sinners (Matthew 9:1-8; Luke 7:36-50). In other words, as believer you *are* truly forgiven!!!

So, for recurring feelings of guilt/shame, a Christian (that is, a person who has been forgiven *all* sins, through Christ's death on the cross) can pray: **"Lord Jesus - not guilty - it is finished. Thank you, Abba Father. Amen."**

Likewise, if you prefer, you can also speak back Scripture to negative thoughts and guilty feelings (see Appendix B under Audio/Video/Media for additional resources on the renewal of our minds and taking our thoughts captive).

It is only through actively learning who God (Jesus Christ) is, as well as about His character, that we can cultivate the mind of God, and grow in our trust, faith and relationship with Him:

> So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.
>
> 1 Peter 5:6–7 (NLT)

CHAPTER 8

Road to Recovery/Restore/Transitions

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you go through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched; the flames will not set you ablaze.
Isaiah 43:2 (BSB)

When you think about the word ‘transition,’ - what comes to mind? Biblically speaking, a ‘transition’ is a change in the desires of a person’s heart. In Scripture, this change is divinely guided by God through the work of the Holy Spirit. We find examples of such a change in the lives of individuals: physically, spiritually, emotionally (2 Samuel 12), change in groups of people through situations (Acts 2), or nations, like the departure of God’s people from Egypt (Exodus 12:31-14:31).

Whether two thousand years ago or today, transitions are a natural part of life. They are not restricted to age - you could be twenty, fifty, or seventy-five years old and still experience a transition in your life (big or small).

As you travel along the road to recovery, there may be several transitions taking place in a short period of time. Regardless, these transitions impact our choices, and therefore, *we must surrender* our decisions to God (Psalm 31:5; Proverbs 3:5-6).

So how do we start to put our lives back together again? Taking an inventory of what has been lost and what remains is a good way of getting a handle on the situation (adapted from Charles F. Stanley). You may feel like you have lost everything (e.g. friends, family, health, finances, material loss, etc.), but remember you are not alone (Deuteronomy 31:8; Psalm 56:8-9). This is a time to ‘shift your focus,’ to something more uplifting. Make a list of what you *do* have - a ‘gratitude list.’

In spite of how things may look or feel at the present time, there is always *something* to be grateful for. So, ask yourself: What am I grateful for? Create a list starting from the smallest to the biggest. As you consider this, you may be surprised at how many things come to mind.

Take it one day at a time, starting from the moment you wake up in the morning. An example of a gratitude list could look something like this:

Thank you heavenly Father for all the blessings of today, I am so grateful for:

1. The gift of life (that I woke up this morning).
2. Good health (I am not feeling ill).
3. Healing (for healing me inside and out).
4. Shelter (for providing a roof over my head).
5. Food to eat (that I am not hungry).
6. Clean water to drink (that I have access to clean water).
7. Clothes to wear (that I am not naked).

It is important to be grateful for the things we often take for granted. Like heat, electricity, fresh air, being able to walk, see, smell, touch, hear, etc. This is especially important in light of all the suffering in the world. The Bible tells us:

> Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it. So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content.
>
> 1 Timothy 6:6–8 (NLT)

Here are some examples of gratitude in the Bible: 1 Timothy 6:7-8; Psalm 118:24; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Throughout Scripture, there are many verses that express thankfulness and gratitude. Use this time as an opportunity to explore the Bible more deeply.

Alternatively if you prefer, you can recite short prayers of thanksgiving in your mind as you go about your day. Explore the book of Psalms to get some ideas. Do what is most comfortable for you. Keep your mind and heart focused on the *goodness* of God (Psalm 23:6; Psalm 28:7; Psalm 145:9; Nahum 1:7).

As you are transitioning, you may be in a situation where you have no godly Christian friends, but do not let that keep you from reaching out to Christ. He knows everything you are going through, how you feel and the circumstances of your situation. Recall, that in the Bible, many godly people felt alone, from time to time, including our Lord Himself - Read about Jesus in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46). Follow Jesus' example, and reach out to Him in prayer. Read about Elijah's struggle with loneliness, and how God responds to him (1 Kings 19). Note, that a person can be surrounded by others, and still feel alone, if these are not godly people (read the Book of Job). Psalm 102 is also very uplifting (see Appendix D for other Psalms that can help you, especially if you are struggling with guilt/shame/unforgiveness).

Restoring parts of our lives may take time as with any other process. What matters most is to remain surrendered to God, trust Him, and not to give up. You have the ‘Comforter’ (the Holy Spirit) to help you, so you are never alone (John 14:16-18).

In sum, the road to recovery will require action on your part, as you work on restoring, and transitioning. This may involve a change in attitude, doing things differently, and letting go of desires, things and even people. A steadfast level of dedication and commitment is required. Also needed, is a level of personal sacrifice, as well as time for healing and rest (physically and emotionally). Most importantly, this restoration requires dedicated time spent with our Lord Jesus Christ in the Bible and in prayer.

Remember, that this may be an intense process, and as you work on one thing, something else may surface. As believers we are never really done (at least not in this life), since Jesus is with us, and there will always be some form of ‘house cleaning’ to do. Life will never be perfect in this world - as there may be setbacks from time to time - but take heart, God will never forsake those who *wholeheartedly* seek Him, which is His promise to you:

> Those who know your name trust in you, for you, O LORD, do not abandon those who search for you.
>
> Psalm 9:10 (NLT)

CHAPTER 9

Setbacks - How to Overcome

The LORD says, “I will rescue those who love me. I will protect those who trust in my name. When they call on me, I will answer; I will be with them in trouble. I will rescue and honor them. I will reward them with a long life and give them my salvation.”
Psalm 91:14–16 (NLT)

The verses above from Psalm 91, provide comfort for believers who need reassurance in times of trouble or distress, to help them realize they are not alone. Psalm 91 has over twenty-five promises from God. He promises to rescue us from tribulations, as well as to protect us from all evil. It is a great Psalm to memorize in its entirety.

The more you read God’s Word (the Bible), the more comfort and strength you will find to help you in times of need. As we set personal goals for ourselves, and make changes in our lives, we are restoring and transitioning from one situation to another. Hereby, setbacks are a common part of the process. But take courage - setbacks are not final, no matter how often they happen. Remember, God promises to help us in our times of need:

> The godly may trip seven times, but they will get up again. But one disaster is enough to overthrow the wicked.
> Proverbs 24:16 (NLT)

> The righteous person faces many troubles, but the LORD comes to the rescue each time.
> Psalm 34:19 (NLT)

There are many verses and examples of God repeatedly rescuing His people (after they had confessed, repented of their sins and cried out to Him in prayer) (e.g. Psalm 107). Satan is always waiting for an opportunity to tempt you, even more so, when you have made a personal commitment to do the will of God (1 Peter 5:8). So be on guard, and put on the armor of God daily (Ephesians 6:10-20), even *before* you begin your day.

Spiritual setbacks are a common experience for believers. They can be caused either by our own sinful nature, by Satan, or both. This is an ongoing spiritual battle Christians face on a daily basis. Another cause of setbacks is

giving into the temptation of pride. Pride is a sin that God hates, because it undermines our relationship with Him and other people. Lastly, peer pressure can also contribute to setbacks. It may feel like the odds are stacked against you. You may feel discouraged and want to quit, but stay the course and keep your eyes focused on your goal - which is to be truly free of this 'habitual sin,' along with any other sins, through Jesus Christ.

In the chart below are examples of setbacks godly people in the Bible have experienced and how they overcame with the help of our Lord:

Read About The Life of...	Personal Setback(s)	Faith in God	Deliverance - God's Response
Joseph Genesis 30:25 (Birth) Genesis 37, 39-50	*Sold into slavery by his brothers. *Falsely accused and imprisoned.	Gen.41:51-52 Gen.50:19-20	Genesis 39:2-3, 21, 23
Job (Book of Job)	*Loss of Wealth *Loss of Children *Loss of Health	Job 1:13-22 Job 2:6-10	Job 42:10-17
King David 1 Samuel 16-31 2 Samuel 1 Kings 1-2:12	*Adultery *Murder *Family betrayal	2 Sam. 22 1 Kings 2:1-4	2 Samuel 7
Apostle Paul	*Imprisonment *Persecution	Acts 16:23-26 2 Tim. 1:12-13	Acts 18:9-11 Acts 23:11 2 Timothy 4:16-18

Today, depending on where you live in the world, some of the setbacks mentioned above may apply. Regardless of where you live, people will always experience some kind of loss or suffering, due to external factors beyond their control. Whether persecution, betrayal, death in the family, loss of finances, victims of theft, fraud, scams, etc. As a result, such events may prompt a person to (temporarily) fall back into the old ways of coping - 'habitual sin.'

When you experience a setback, *always* confess and repent right away. Do not let any feelings of embarrassment, fear, guilt, or shame keep you from going directly to Jesus for help. Satan wants to keep you from going to God for help - so he will cause you to have feelings like 'fear,' 'unworthiness,' or destructive thoughts towards yourself and others, as a result of your setback. Remember, that when Jesus Christ died on the cross, He broke the power of sin over you:

> When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus. Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires.
>
> Romans 6:10–12 (NLT)

Be kind, gentle, merciful, and compassionate to yourself (just as you would to a friend or family member). Focus on the fruits of the Spirit:

> But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!
>
> Galatians 5:22–23 (NLT)

Most importantly, forgive yourself, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Consider setbacks as a spiritual way to grow closer to God. So, if there is no one to encourage you, you must encourage yourself. Perseverance is key here, to help you get back on track:

> So do not throw away your confidence; it holds a great reward. You need to persevere, so that after you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised.
>
> Hebrews 10:35–36 (BSB)

Furthermore, a setback could be a way God is trying to bring something to your attention, that you have not addressed. The question to ask yourself is: “God, what are you trying to teach me here?” There may be an idol in your heart, an issue with pride, or something else that you were not aware of (Proverbs 4:23). Sometimes, when everything is going well, we may have a tendency to backslide in our time spent with God in the Bible and in prayer. We may feel so strong that we think we can handle things on our own (which is a form of pride). As a result, we let our guard down. This is when we need to be especially careful (1 Corinthians 10:12-13).

Developing a humble heart is important here, since one can never be too humble. This does not mean that you are at the mercy of those around you. What it does mean is that you can do nothing without God, and must surrender all to Jesus Christ, Who is in control of everything (Matthew 28:18).

Pray and ask God for wisdom and spiritual discernment in your everyday life. He will not withhold this from you:

> Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.
>
> James 1:5 (BSB)

> So be careful how you live. Don’t live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days.
>
> Ephesians 5:15–16 (NLT)

Lastly, when setbacks come (and they most likely will) - stop, and go directly to Jesus in prayer. Do not turn to people for help first, but go directly to the One who knows you better than you know yourself, and who is all-powerful, all-knowing and everywhere present. There is nothing He cannot handle, and nothing that He cannot overcome.

You can have peace of heart and mind, knowing that you are in the hands of God. As a follower of Christ, nothing can touch you, unless it is God’s will. So there is no need to be afraid. Instead, be of good courage:

> Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled; do not be afraid.
>
> John 14:27 (BSB)

CHAPTER 10

Hope for the Future

I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.
Romans 15:13 (NLT)

After taking time for healing, rest, and spending time in God's Word, you may now be ready to prayerfully put your plans into action. No matter how long it has taken for you to get to this point, if you feel strong enough, and have received direction from God, it is time for you to move forward in faith and trust (Hebrews 10:35-36).

Setting personal goals is one thing, but we must also put them into action. It is only through our actions, that we feel that something is happening, and that something is changing for the better. So what would that look like? It could be taking better care of yourself (through healthier eating, better hygiene, exercise, etc.). It could be joining a Bible-based, Christ-centered church. You may also consider going back to school (college/university, etc.).

Likewise, taking online courses (in Christian theology, Bible study, or even preparing for seminary etc.) may be an option. You may also want to consider volunteering. Help those less fortunate or others who are struggling with addictions (Note: be careful when assisting those who are struggling with the same 'habitual sin' that you have experienced, in order to avoid temptations and setbacks) (Galatians 6:1).

Make sure that you maintain healthy boundaries (e.g. women should help other women, and men should help other men). In this way, there is healing by helping others. Not only does it take the focus off of yourself, but it is also a reminder of the awesome work Jesus has done in your life and how far you have come.

Most importantly, through all of this, *stay* in the Bible (Joshua 1:8-9). It may take time to put your plans into action. Keep the lines of communication open between God and yourself. Let the Holy Spirit guide you. Things may not happen immediately, since God's timing is not our timing (Habakkuk 2:3). The Bible consistently tells us to be patient, and to let our Lord work in and through our lives, in order to intercede on our behalf:

> Yet I am confident I will see the LORD’s goodness while I am here in the land of the living. Wait patiently for the LORD. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the LORD.
> Psalm 27:13–14 (NLT)

You need to give God the time He needs to put everything into place (people, situations, etc.). Only He can see past, present, and future. What may seem like a delay to you may be His way of protecting you and others. Trust that He knows when the time is right. Do not run ahead of God out of impatience. There are always blessings for waiting patiently on the Lord and consequences for not waiting (i.e. missing out on God’s best). Waiting on God is also a form of reverence, and a way of acknowledging Him as your personal sovereign Leader and divine Guide.

As your plans start to take shape and are put into action, and once you are settled in and comfortable with your surroundings and the people you are interacting with, ask the Holy Spirit - in prayer - to reveal opportunities to witness to others. This is not optional. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are commanded to share the ‘good news’ (gospel), with those who are not believers, and we are called to fulfill the ‘Great Commission’ (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:6-11; John 20:19-21). The Holy Spirit gives us the guidance and courage we need to speak when an opportunity arises. He also guides us what to say in any given situation. Always use discretion and common sense in your evangelism.

As you share the ‘good news,’ you may also want to mention how God has worked in your life. This is also an opportunity to share the joy and hope that you have in Christ. Be careful, not to overwhelm others with too much at first. You can also witness silently to people around you by the way you interact with them, the things you say, and how you conduct yourself. As they see a difference in you they may want to know more. As the apostle Peter explains:

> But in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give a defense to everyone who asks you the reason for the hope that is in you. But respond with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who slander you may be put to shame by your good behavior in Christ.
> 1 Peter 3:15–16 (BSB)

With things now progressing in your life, keep in mind that there will be spiritual warfare. This is due to the fact that Satan tries to undermine believers. The devil may tempt you to doubt God. The devil may also try to undermine your newly found faith in Jesus Christ. Do not let Him! Speak back Scripture to thoughts of doubt. Let Jesus defend you against Satan (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13; James 4:7-8). Additionally, as mentioned before, having

a good support system in place (godly friends/family) is an asset. Nevertheless, Jesus Christ - is *always* your Number One 'go to.'

As a result of obeying and surrendering to God - with the help of Jesus Christ, you can expect to transition into a time of inner peace, joy, and hope as the changes to your life are applied in a godly and organized way. Difficulties may arise along the way. But *with Christ* to help you, you are now equipped to endure and persevere:

> *"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."*
>
> John 16:33 (NLT)

The inner peace, joy and hope our Lord is referring to here, are beyond what the world can offer. Apart from God, man-made ideas are ineffective to overcome challenges, let alone ('habitual sins(s). God's peace, which is beyond human understanding, is freely available to His children. God's grace, mercy and forgiveness are available through Jesus. Our Lord promises us:

> *"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid."*
>
> John 14:27 (NLT)

While we are here on this earth - despite challenges and obstacles in our walk of faith - we let go of old passions, sinful desires and worldly things, so that we may serve the One and Only true God - our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

> Jesus replied, *"I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin. A slave is not a permanent member of the family, but a son is part of the family forever. So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free."*
>
> John 8:34–36 (NLT)

Conclusion

Putting It All Together

Now that you have read the chapters, you may better understand why secular programs do not work over time. Throughout the book, you may have noticed that there is a 'red thread' throughout and that is *repentance, and faith in Jesus Christ*. Without Christ, you *cannot* be successful at overcoming your 'habitual sin(s).'

As we continue to make changes in our lives it is important to remember what we have learned (See Appendix E for key points from each chapter). Keep in mind, that this is an ongoing process, and we are never truly done. In this life there will always be spiritual warfare to deal with while we live in this world.

Always remind yourself, that *only Jesus* can fight spiritual warfare for you. You cannot. Therefore, you must let go of all pride and self-sufficiency, so that Christ can humble you and help you, as you come to Him daily with a repentant heart. As you claim your identity in Christ, do not forget that He *has* defeated Satan, evil and all sin, through His atoning work on the cross.

To grow in your walk of faith with Jesus, and letting Him help you overcome your 'habitual sin(s),' you have to stay close to Him. You do this by reading your Bible daily and spending quality time with our Lord in prayer. In that way, you are best positioned for lifestyle changes, setting personal goals, the road to recovery and to overcome setbacks. Also, you may want to reread this booklet at a later point in time, as a reminder and for encouragement.

I pray that you will find true freedom from whatever 'habitual sin(s)' you may be dealing with and that your personal relationship with Jesus Christ will grow stronger as the days and weeks go by. May He give you the courage, strength, and wisdom to make the right decisions and to overcome whatever 'habitual sin(s)' you may be dealing with. And may He supply all your needs (physically, emotionally and spiritually) as you take each moment, step-by-step, down a new path to true freedom in Christ.

"…So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free."
John 8:36 (NLT)

May the love of God, and the fellowship of Jesus Christ be with you, now and forever.

Amen.

APPENDIX A

Glossary

Addiction - See Habitual Sin

Angel - A supernatural being. Some angels obey God (angels), others do not obey God and are ‘fallen angels’ (demons), who serve the devil (Satan).

Armor of God - God’s divine protection, available to all believers, and the best way to prepare against spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-17).

Atonement - Christ’s substitutionary death on the cross to provide salvation for all who believe in Him.

Bible - God’s revelation of Himself to humankind, with the Gospel at the centre.

Boundaries - God-given limitations for people, mainly expressed in the Ten Commandments, put into proper perspective by Jesus Christ and manifested in the New Testament Epistles.

Christian - A follower of Jesus Christ (believer).

Confession - The act of expressing sin(s) committed, then turning away from them with God’s help (repentance) (1 John 1:9).

Conviction - The Holy Spirit pointing out sin in the life of a Christian, in order to prompt confession and repentance.

Creator - God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit working together as divine Trinity in creation. (Adapted from Packer, J. I. *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993., p.39.).

Eternity - The unending state of being either in God’s presence (heaven), or being separated from Him (hell).

Evil - The absence of good.

Faith - Understanding and believing in Christ's atoning work on the cross and His resurrection.

Forgiveness - The act of forgiving sin(s) committed against us by someone else. Jesus is the *only* One, who can forgive sins, but we can imitate Him, as we forgive others and even ourselves.

Gospel - The 'good news' that Jesus Christ died on the cross, was raised three days later, so that repentant sinners (believers) are reconciled to God, receive eternal salvation, are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and have a personal relationship with God.

Grace - God not giving someone what they deserve, pardoning them out of love for them.

Gratitude - The act of being thankful for what God has done in the life of a Christian.

Guilt - A feeling of weight on a person's conscience, for sin(s) committed by that person, or against that person ('false guilt').

Habitual Sin - An ongoing, unaddressed, sinful state of being and behavior - often referred to by secular society as 'addiction.'

Heaven - The eternal state of being with God.

Hell - The eternal state of being without God.

Holy Spirit - The third Person of the Trinity, co-equal and co-eternal with God - the Father, and God - the Son (Jesus Christ).

Humility - A repentant heart surrendered to God. The opposite of pride.

Hypocrites - People who pretend to be (and act out) something they are not.

Idolatry - Worshiping anything else, but God (Jesus Christ).

Image of God (Imago Dei) - Human beings are made in the image of God, expressing shared characteristics of God, such as forgiveness, mercy and love.

Jesus Christ - The Savior of the world (the Messiah).

Judgment - The final and ultimate event at the Second Coming of Christ, when God reconciles all believers to Himself (heaven), and separates Himself from unbelievers, Satan and demons (hell).

Justification - Christ justifying believers through His death on the cross, declaring them ‘not guilty’ before God, sparing them God’s eternal wrath.

Kingdom of God - See heaven.

Lamb of God - See Jesus Christ.

Lucifer - Another name for Satan.

Pagans - Unbelievers who worship idols.

Prayer - Believers communing with God (Jesus Christ).

Pride - The opposite of humility. A prideful person sees no need to surrender to God, i.e. saying “I know better than God does.” A person can always be too prideful, but never too humble!

Religion - A collective term for various man-made belief systems, which falsely includes Christianity. Christianity is unique, due to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Remorse - Feeling badly (yet unrepentant) about being caught in a sinful act.

Repentance - Confessing sin and turning away from it with God’s help.

Resurrection - After His crucifixion and death, Christ was physically raised from the dead, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is different from those examples in the Bible, who were revived from the dead, but later died again.

Reverence - A respectful desire to honor and worship God.

Righteousness - Imitating Christ in the godly life of the believer.

Salvation - Faith in Jesus Christ, as risen Lord, enables a Christian to be eternally saved.

Sanctification - The ongoing process of being more like Jesus, finalized as the believer goes to heaven.

Satan - (a.k.a. the devil, Lucifer) The leader of the fallen angels (‘demons’) who hates and opposes God, as well as people.

Scripture - (a.k.a. Bible) See Bible.

Second Coming - Jesus' return on Judgment Day.

Sovereignty - God's ultimate control over all that happens in the world.

Spiritual Discernment - Following the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Synagogue - A Jewish place of worship.

Temptation - The enticement by Satan or our own broken sin nature or both, to trespass (sin) against God and/or other people.

The Great Commission - Fulfilling Jesus' command to share the Gospel ('Good News') with other people (Matthew 28:18-20).

Trinity - The triune Godhead - God - the Father, God - the Son (Jesus Christ), God - the Holy Spirit.

Unbeliever - A person who does not believe in Jesus Christ.

Unrepentance - A decision not to confess and turn away from sin(s).

APPENDIX B

Further Recommended Resources

Bibles:

Good Bible versions and translations:

Berean Standard Bible (BSB) - A public-domain translation.
English Standard Version (ESV)
New Living Translation (NLT) - A great paraphrase version.
New American Standard Bible (NASB 1995).

Books:

Anderson, Neil T. *The Bondage Breaker*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2019.

Addresses the nature of Spiritual warfare that Christians face.
Focuses on claiming our identity in Christ.
Many effective reflection tools to help overcome sin, evil, Satan, as well as destructive habits.
For individual use and group study.
Highly recommended resource.
Genre: Christian Living.
Reading Level: Beginner.

Cloud, Henry and John Sims Townsend. *Boundaries: When to say Yes, How to say No and take Control of Your Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992.

Bible-based, Christ-centered resource that helps us gain a better understanding of the nature and purpose of God-given boundaries.
Learn more about what boundaries are, what constitutes boundary conflicts and how to develop healthy boundaries.
Scripture verses are applied well to the topic at hand.
Short to medium chapter length.
Very practical book that applies to many life situations.
Recommended resource.
Genre: Christian Living.
Reading Level: Beginner.

Cloud, Henry and John Sims Townsend. *Safe People: How to Find Relationships That Are Good for You and Avoid Those That Aren't*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016.

Recommended resource for understanding the nature of relationships, those which are healthy and those which are not.
Geared towards anyone who has experienced unhelpful, abusive and other detrimental relationships.
Short chapters and occasional bullet point layout, make for easy reading.
A helpful resource for individual use and suited for Christian counselling.
Genre: Christian Living.
Reading Level: Beginner.

Reinke, Tony. John Piper (Foreword). *Ask Pastor John: 750 Bible Answers to Life's Most Important Questions*. Hardcover. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2024.

This is a helpful book that provides solid Bible-based and Christ-centered answers to many questions believers may have.
It covers a range of topics, such as life issues, practical Christian living, help in overcoming addictions, the reality of heaven and hell, death and dying, assurance of salvation, Bible time, and a lot more.
Solid answers based on Scripture, to many of life's toughest questions.
There is a lot of encouragement here for all of us Christians.
Highly recommended resource.
Genre: Christian Living.
Reading Level: Beginner.

Note: Also, very helpful is the full audio podcast list, covering John Piper's free podcasts (2013-2022) with over 1800 episodes to listen to along with transcripts, that can be accessed here:

https://www.desiringgod.org/topics/with-interviews

Stanley, Charles F. C*harles Stanley's Handbook for Christian Living: Biblical Answers to Life's Tough Questions*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008.

This book covers virtually all aspects of the Christian life.
It is Bible-based and Christ-centred, and covers a wide range of topics (i.e. church concerns, daily living, doctrine, end times, personal growth, relationships, service and outreach and spiritual disciplines).
All chapters are relatively short and the page layout make for easy navigation and easy reading.
Good subject index.
No Scripture index.

Suitable for individual study, small group study, and Christian counselling.
Highly recommended resource.
Genre: Christian Living.
Reading Level: Beginner.

Note: another great similar resource, yet a bit more advanced, is Sproul, R.C. *Now, that's a good question!* Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996.

Stanley, Charles F. *The Charles F. Stanley Life Principles Bible*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017.

Helpful and very practical resource.
Based on the “30 Life Principles’ of C.F. Stanley.
Easy to navigate.
Practical life lessons and bottom of almost every page.
Life examples of people in the Bible.
Answers to Life’s Questions and ‘What the Bible says about’ are practical easy to follow and applicable.
Outstanding concordance and a few maps at the end of the book.
Highly recommended resource.
Genre: Biblical Studies/Christian Living.
Reading Level: Beginner.

Stanley, Charles F. *Prayer: The Ultimate Conversation*. New York, NY: Howard Books, New York, 2013.

Covers many aspects of prayer.
Why do we pray?
Why should we pray?
What does the Bible tell us and teach us about prayer?
Highly recommended resource.
Genre: Christian Living.
Reading Level: Beginner.

Stanley, Charles F. *Living in the Power of the Holy Spirit*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005.

Highly recommended resource to learn more about the Person and Power of the Holy Spirit.
Short chapters and easy to read overall.
Ideal for both individual use and group Bible Study.
Genre: Christian Living.
Reading Level: Beginner

Stanley, Charles F. *Experiencing Forgiveness (Life Principles Study Series)*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008.

A ten-lesson study guide about forgiveness.
Covers a whole range of issues that deal with forgiveness, along with the meaning of unforgiveness.
With useful reflection questions.
Ideal for group study, yet also suited for individual reflection.
Genre: Christian living.
Reading Level: Beginner.

Stanley, Charles F. *Rebuild: Forming a Life of Sustaining Faith and Intimacy With God*. Intouch Ministries.
Available at:
https://store.intouch.org/purchase/rebuild-workbook&ved=2ahUKEwjzy6LSqYiOAxUUEFkFHaktGw0QFnoECDEQAQ&usg=AOvVaw0nx_6PW3k8Hb1PqiT3-QsX

12-week workbook to help people navigate the process of grieving and loss.
Easy to follow along.
Good layout.
Based on the writing of the Apostle Peter.
Recommended for anyone.
Genre: Christian Living.
Reading Level: B.

Another helpful related resource, both for individual and group use is:
Guthrie, David and Nancy Guthrie. *Grief and Share: Your Journey from Mourning to Joy*. 2011.

Christian Biographies

If you are interested in Christian biographies and Church history, a top resource I recently read and highly recommend is by Cole, Steven J. *Great Christians You Should Know: What I've Learned from Reading Christian Biographies*. 2021. This book is available for purchase. You can get a free overview of the gist of the book here:

https://bible.org/article/mining-gold-what-i-ve-learned-reading-christian-biographies

https://bible.org/article/books-growing-christians

and here:
https://bible.org/article/reading-christian-biographies-selected-bibliography-steven-j-cole

Audio/Video/Media:

Audio Sermons by Martyn Lloyd Jones
Renewal of Mind, Part 1-3 Sermons:

https://www.mljtrust.org/sermons/book-of-romans/renewal-of-the-mind-1/

https://www.mljtrust.org/sermons/book-of-romans/renewal-of-the-mind-2/

https://www.mljtrust.org/sermons/book-of-romans/renewal-of-the-mind-3/

Intouch Ministries:

Taking Control of Our Thoughts – Dr. Charles F. Stanley

This helpful sermon addresses our thought life as believers, and what we can do with disruptive, unhelpful thoughts, releasing them to Jesus:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bLgDoFkdqo&t=63s

More valuable in-depth help on thinking and thought life as a believer, can be found in “Thoughts,” in Stanley, Charles F. C*harles Stanley's Handbook for Christian Living: Biblical Answers to Life's Tough Questions*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008, p.353-358.

Education (Free):

Charles Stanley Institute

https://charlesstanleyinstitute.org

Covenant Theological Seminary

https://resources.covenantseminary.edu

BiblicalTraining.org

https://www.biblicaltraining.org

Free Resources:

https://bible.org

https://www.blueletterbible.org

Additional Software (paid):

https://www.logos.com

APPENDIX C

Turning Your Life Over To Jesus

Prayer you can pray for turning your life over to Jesus Christ:

Lord Jesus,
I come to You as a broken sinner with a repentant heart.
My sins are many, and I have sinned against You.
I acknowledge that on my own, I cannot earn my salvation.
I believe that You came as ‘God in the Flesh’ to atone for all my sins.
You did this for me, by dying on the cross, rising three days later,
ascending to heaven and sending the Holy Spirit.
I come to You in humble submission, as Your child, Lord Jesus,
and embrace You as my personal Lord and Savior.
Amen.

APPENDIX D

Scripture verses for Encouragement

When Alone (and needing assurance of being truly forgiven)

Psalm 23

1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. 3 He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for the sake of His name. 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.
Psalm 23 (BSB)

Psalm 25

A psalm of David.

1 O LORD, I give my life to you. 2 I trust in you, my God! Do not let me be disgraced, or let my enemies rejoice in my defeat. 3 No one who trusts in you will ever be disgraced, but disgrace comes to those who try to deceive others. 4 Show me the right path, O LORD; point out the road for me to follow. 5 Lead me by your truth and teach me, for you are the God who saves me. All day long I put my hope in you. 6 Remember, O LORD, your compassion and unfailing love, which you have shown from long ages past. 7 Do not remember the rebellious sins of my youth. Remember me in the light of your unfailing love, for you are merciful, O LORD. 8 The LORD is good and does what is right; he shows the proper path to those who go astray. 9 He leads the humble in doing right, teaching them his way. 10 The LORD leads with unfailing love and faithfulness all who keep his covenant and obey his demands. 11 For the honor of your name, O LORD, forgive my many, many sins. 12 Who are those who fear the LORD? He will show them the path they should choose. 13 They will live in prosperity, and their children will inherit the land. 14 The LORD is a friend to those who fear him. He teaches them his covenant. 15 My eyes are always on the LORD, for he rescues me from the traps of my enemies. 16 Turn to me and have mercy, for I am alone and in deep distress. 17 My problems go from bad to worse. Oh, save me from them all! 18 Feel my pain and see my trouble. Forgive all my sins. 19 See how many enemies I have and how viciously they hate me! 20 Protect me!

Rescue my life from them! Do not let me be disgraced, for in you I take refuge. 21 May integrity and honesty protect me, for I put my hope in you. 22 O God, ransom Israel from all its troubles.
Psalm 25 (NLT)
Psalm 32

A psalm of David.

1 Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! 2 Yes, what joy for those whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty! 3 When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. 4 Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. 5 Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, “I will confess my rebellion to the LORD.” And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone. 6 Therefore, let all the godly pray to you while there is still time, that they may not drown in the floodwaters of judgment. 7 For you are my hiding place; you protect me from trouble. You surround me with songs of victory. 8 The LORD says, “I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you. 9 Do not be like a senseless horse or mule that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control.” 10 Many sorrows come to the wicked, but unfailing love surrounds those who trust the LORD. 11 So rejoice in the LORD and be glad, all you who obey him! Shout for joy, all you whose hearts are pure!
Psalm 32 (NLT)

Psalm 51

For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time Nathan the prophet came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

1 Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. 2 Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. 3 For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. 4 Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just. 5 For I was born a sinner— yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. 6 But you desire honesty from the womb, teaching me wisdom even there. 7 Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. 8 Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me— now let me rejoice. 9 Don’t keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. 11 Do not banish me from your presence, and don’t take your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you. 13 Then I will teach your ways to

rebels, and they will return to you. 14 Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves; then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness. 15 Unseal my lips, O Lord, that my mouth may praise you. 16 You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering. 17 The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God. 18 Look with favor on Zion and help her; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. 19 Then you will be pleased with sacrifices offered in the right spirit— with burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings. Then bulls will again be sacrificed on your altar.
Psalm 51 (NLT)
Psalm 102

A prayer of one overwhelmed with trouble, pouring out problems before the LORD.

1 LORD, hear my prayer! Listen to my plea! 2 Don’t turn away from me in my time of distress. Bend down to listen, and answer me quickly when I call to you. 3 For my days disappear like smoke, and my bones burn like red-hot coals. 4 My heart is sick, withered like grass, and I have lost my appetite. 5 Because of my groaning, I am reduced to skin and bones. 6 I am like an owl in the desert, like a little owl in a far-off wilderness. 7 I lie awake, lonely as a solitary bird on the roof. 8 My enemies taunt me day after day. They mock and curse me. 9 I eat ashes for food. My tears run down into my drink 10 because of your anger and wrath. For you have picked me up and thrown me out. 11 My life passes as swiftly as the evening shadows. I am withering away like grass. 12 But you, O LORD, will sit on your throne forever. Your fame will endure to every generation. 13 You will arise and have mercy on Jerusalem— and now is the time to pity her, now is the time you promised to help. 14 For your people love every stone in her walls and cherish even the dust in her streets. 15 Then the nations will tremble before the LORD. The kings of the earth will tremble before his glory. 16 For the LORD will rebuild Jerusalem. He will appear in his glory. 17 He will listen to the prayers of the destitute. He will not reject their pleas. 18 Let this be recorded for future generations, so that a people not yet born will praise the LORD. 19 Tell them the LORD looked down from his heavenly sanctuary. He looked down to earth from heaven 20 to hear the groans of the prisoners, to release those condemned to die. 21 And so the LORD’s fame will be celebrated in Zion, his praises in Jerusalem, 22 when multitudes gather together and kingdoms come to worship the LORD. 23 He broke my strength in midlife, cutting short my days. 24 But I cried to him, “O my God, who lives forever, don’t take my life while I am so young! 25 Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth and made the heavens with your hands. 26 They will perish, but you remain forever; they will wear out like old clothing. You will change them like a garment and discard them. 27 But you are always the same; you will live forever. 28 The children of your people will live in security. Their children’s children will thrive in your presence.”

Psalm 102 (NLT)

Psalm 103

A psalm of David.

1 Let all that I am praise the LORD; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy
name. 2 Let all that I am praise the LORD; may I never forget the good things
he does for me. 3 He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. 4 He
redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies. 5 He
fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle’s! 6 The
LORD gives righteousness and justice to all who are treated unfairly. 7 He
revealed his character to Moses and his deeds to the people of Israel. 8 The
LORD is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with
unfailing love. 9 He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever.
10 He does not punish us for all our sins; he does not deal harshly with us, as
we deserve. 11 For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great
as the height of the heavens above the earth. 12 He has removed our sins as
far from us as the east is from the west. 13 The LORD is like a father to his
children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. 14 For he knows
how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust. 15 Our days on earth are
like grass; like wildflowers, we bloom and die. 16 The wind blows, and we are
gone— as though we had never been here. 17 But the love of the LORD
remains forever with those who fear him. His salvation extends to the
children’s children 18 of those who are faithful to his covenant, of those who
obey his commandments! 19 The LORD has made the heavens his throne;
from there he rules over everything. 20 Praise the LORD, you angels, you
mighty ones who carry out his plans, listening for each of his commands. 21
Yes, praise the LORD, you armies of angels who serve him and do his will! 22
Praise the LORD, everything he has created, everything in all his kingdom.
Let all that I am praise the LORD.
Psalm 103 (NLT)

Other Psalms:

Psalm 19
Psalm 27
Psalm 46
Psalm 84
Psalm 91
Psalm 121
Psalm 139

APPENDIX E

Brief Summary of Chapter Key Points

Chapter 1 - The Gospel

- ◊ Jesus was born to save repentant sinners.
- ◊ His crucifixion and death was to atone for the sins of all believers.
- ◊ The moment a repentant sinner believes in Jesus, the Holy Spirit permanently indwells and seals that person for the day of redemption.
- ◊ We cannot lose our salvation.
- ◊ It is only through Jesus Christ that we can enter heaven.
- ◊ By contrast, all man-made religions worship idols of some kind.
- ◊ The only work that Jesus requires of us is to believe in Him.

Chapter 2 - Bondage to Sin

- ◊ Adam and Eve committed the first sin, disobeying God's explicit command. This was the fall of mankind.
- ◊ Satan (Lucifer) is now an enemy of God *and* ours as well.
- ◊ Only Jesus can deal with Satan on our behalf.
- ◊ Jesus conquered Satan, sin, death and all evil.
- ◊ Pride is a major contributor to unrepentant sin.
- ◊ Repentance restores our relationship with God.
- ◊ With a heart of humility, we can come to the Father in repentance, asking for forgiveness, and He will forgive us.
- ◊ There will always be confession and repentance through prayer to our Lord, asking for forgiveness of our sins.
- ◊ Consistent Bible reading helps us overcome sin.

Chapter 3 - Habitual Sins - Why We Have Them - Understanding and Dealing with Our Sins

- ◊ A lot of 'habitual sin(s)' have been given man-made labels, identifying them as a 'disease' of some kind.
- ◊ These man-made views are not biblical.
- ◊ These man-made labels are confusing - leading a person to think that they are suffering from a 'disease,' when in truth it is 'habitual sin.'
- ◊ Do not buy into preconceived worldviews, that only focus on symptoms.
- ◊ In reality, the void (or cause), needs to be addressed.
- ◊ The void is not having a personal relationship with Christ.
- ◊ Without Jesus, it is not going to work.

- ◊ Unrepentant sin leads to feelings of shame, guilt, anxiety, and bitterness, etc. It can interfere with a person's health and ability to function.

Chapter 4 - Sin - Repentance - Guilt - Forgiveness

- ◊ Today, many people are unaware of the meaning, nature and reality of sin.
- ◊ We sin unknowingly against God, ourselves and others daily.
- ◊ Repentance is agreeing with God that we have sinned against Him, and a willingness to turn from sin.
- ◊ Repentance does not happen in our own strength or willpower - it is the grace of God.
- ◊ Any form of unforgiveness is a sin - this includes unforgiveness towards ourselves, others and God.
- ◊ God commands us to forgive those who sin against us.
- ◊ Forgiveness frees us from feelings of bitterness, pain, hostility, guilt, shame and keeps our hearts soft.

Chapter 5 - Prayer

- ◊ Prayer is direct communication with God.
- ◊ Through prayer, we receive strength, courage, protection, guidance, and blessings to meet the needs of the day or situation.
- ◊ Prayer reassures us that we are not alone and that Jesus will guide us.
- ◊ What matters most is a humble heart bent towards God.
- ◊ Always go about everything in a prayerful manner.
- ◊ Being still, you can listen out for and hear God more easily.
- ◊ God works behind the scenes, putting everything into place.
- ◊ God's timing is not our timing.
- ◊ God's timing is always perfect.

Chapter 6 - Lifestyle Changes

- ◊ The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sins and helps us overcome them.
- ◊ He helps us to discern between believers and unbelievers, which is vital for us in preparing for our lifestyle changes.
- ◊ We need to have a solid relationship with Christians.
- ◊ For most people, life changes are not easy.
- ◊ Give yourself time to adjust.
- ◊ You may go through a period of mourning over the loss of a relationship, or giving up sin(s) that at one time, you thought brought you pleasure.
- ◊ Be patient, kind and loving to yourself.
- ◊ Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

◊ Rest in Christ, and let Him heal you - especially during your time of mourning.

Chapter 7 - Setting Personal Goals - Preparing For The Road To Recovery

◊ Confess and repent all sins in prayer to Jesus Christ - including your 'habitual sin(s).'
◊ Your main focus is to let go of the past with the help of God.
◊ Be alone with God in prayer.
◊ It is important that we take our thoughts captive.

Chapter 8 - Road to Recovery - Restore - Transitions

◊ There is always something to be grateful for.
◊ Keep your mind and heart focused on the goodness of God.
◊ You have the 'Comforter' (the Holy Spirit) to help you, so you are *never* alone.

Chapter 9 - Setbacks - How To Overcome

◊ The more you read God's Word (the Bible), the more comfort and strength you will find to help you in times of need.
◊ Satan is always waiting for an opportunity to tempt you.
◊ Be on guard, and put on the armor of God daily, even before you begin your day.
◊ Spiritual setbacks are a common experience for believers.
◊ Setbacks can be caused by our own sinful nature, by Satan, or both.
◊ Christians face an ongoing spiritual battle daily.
◊ Another cause of setbacks is giving into the temptation of pride.
◊ Be kind, gentle, merciful, and compassionate to yourself.
◊ Most importantly, forgive yourself, as God in Christ has forgiven you.
◊ God may be trying to bring something to your attention through a setback.
◊ Developing a humble heart is important.
◊ Setbacks will come - stop, and go directly to Jesus in prayer.

Chapter 10 - Hope For The Future

◊ Putting personal goals into action.
◊ Stay in the Bible.
◊ Give God the time He needs to put everything into place (people, situations, etc.).
◊ Only God can see past, present and future.
◊ Trust the He knows when the time is right.
◊ Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal opportunities to witness to others.

- ◊ As followers of Jesus Christ, we are commanded to share the ‘good news’ (gospel) with unbelievers.
- ◊ Only our Lord can give us inner peace, joy and hope beyond what the world can offer.
- ◊ Apart from God, man-made ideas are ineffective to overcome challenges (‘habitual sin(s).’
- ◊ God’s peace is freely available to His children.
- ◊ God’s grace, mercy and forgiveness are available *only through Jesus*.
- ◊ Always keep in mind that there will be spiritual warfare.
- ◊ With Christ in your life, you are now equipped to endure and persevere.

. . .

Please visit our website:

https://biblebasedchristcentered.wordpress.com

May God bless you and keep you.

Pastor John

Amen.